

The Conjuror's Toolkit 1400-1800: Ciphers, Images, and Magical Cultures of Power Within the Solomononic Grimoires

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Solomonic grimoire manuscripts between 1400-1800. Grimoires, as books of magic materials, claim an ancient lineage from the time of King Solomon of Israel. Modern scholarship has attempted to argue either for or against such a claim, but has not adequately addressed the meanings of imagery and alphabetic symbols contained within each grimoire as an indicator of origin. Through comparisons of several manuscript collections, the basic geometric shapes of circles and squares, that repeatedly form the templates for several objects to be constructed by the magus, are here examined, their various scripts deciphered, and their purpose contextualized for the early modern magician and conjuror. This thesis suggests that the genre of the Solomonic grimoires, in manuscript or printed form, possibly originated only from the 16th-century works of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, a conclusion based on use of the Malachim alphabet. Furthermore, the thesis questions grimoire use beyond library transcriptions, the existence of any practice related to them, and the possible origins of the scientific experiment.

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Introduction

The Hermetic axiom “As above, so below” implies an understanding of a mirrored relationship between the macro and microcosmic worlds; that which is without is also within, or simply: the natures of subjective opposites ultimately lead to a unity or same understanding of existence.¹ In Europe, between 1400 and 1800, to engage a view of the outward universe was to find its mirror or similarity within the human body or within the represented objects in man’s material sphere of experience.² Reducing the whole of the universe to two-dimensional focal points was an exercise found repeated through combined use of sacred text and symbolic images. Written compilations of magical recipes and conjurations, known as grimoires,³ were produced in manuscripts and early print from occultists of the early modern period. All of these early modern texts contain similar pieces of instructive information that can act as a guide to early physicians, astrologers, and philosophers. They were also coveted by magical conjurors who may have created objects designed for spiritual, religious, or practical use, to mirror what was understood to them as the known outer universe.

¹ Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times*, Cornell University Press, 2007, p. 50.

² The medieval and early modern “Zodiac Man” was one example that depicted astrological associations of various parts of the human body. See: Joscelyn Godwin, *Robert Fludd: Hermetic philosopher and surveyor of two worlds*. Red Wheel/Weiser, 1991, pp. 72, 69; as well as: Sophie Page, *Astrology in medieval manuscripts*, University of Toronto Press, 2002, pp. 56, 57.

³ Oxford English Dictionary defines grimoire as “a book of magic spells and invocations; mid 19th century alteration of *grammaire* (grammar)”; See: *Oxford English Dictionary*, (2006) p. 771.

Owen Davies' 2010 *Grimoires, A History of Magic Books*,⁴ although comprehensive in listing the contents of various early modern Solomonian grimoires, does not specifically deal with any early influences in as much detail as the resultant modern pop-culture product.⁵ Davies isn't primarily concerned with any earlier Islamic and Jewish texts and focuses his the bulk of historical analysis on the 16th and 17th centuries. Davies assumes that magic was drained by print culture and only reactivated by transcription, an important distinction when considering the breadth of printed grimoire material. Adam Jortner's 2011 review challenges Davies arguing that the increase of print cultures drew greater attention to the manuscript and thereby increased the number of manuscripts.⁶ This differentiation leads to confusion about what constitutes a written work to be called a grimoire. Davies claims that a grimoire has to be created by hand and that a printed work would therefore not be a grimoire. Jortner, although indicating a need to explore whether manuscript production did indeed increase after printing, leads me to question if the printed works were understood as grimoires or as informative resources to reproduce manuscript copies. Davies' understanding of the dissemination of manuscript and print cultures among an esoteric audience is further complicated by his assertion that more men were literate than women in the 16th century, thus leaving women outside of any grimoire proliferation and historiographical

⁴ Owen Davies. *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁵ Aaron Leitch published a fairly comprehensive outline of the modern day use of medieval and early modern grimoires. Although not recognized as a scholarly piece, his book stands as one of the only works to thoroughly address the whole of the genre of Solomonian manuscripts in a single volume. See: Leitch Aaron, *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires: The Classical Texts of Magick Deciphered*, Llewellyn Publications, First Edition, (2005).

⁶ Adam Jortner, Review of Owen Davies', *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, H-Albion, H-Net Reviews, June 2011.

importance, but then contradictorily discusses how women owned grimoires and used them.⁷

Pamela Allen Brown in her 2003 *Better a Shrew than a Sheep* argues the scholarship on early modern literacy⁸ and states that women, when discussing the methods of learning within the household, may have been more literate than men.⁹ The readership, authorship and use of grimoires then come into question, as does the proliferation and understanding of the contents of each printed book or manuscript. Due to anonymity of various texts in both grimoire and print form, modern scholarship remains ill equipped to conclusively argue a definitive origin by citation alone, favoring a detached gloss at the social understanding of the texts over a specific genealogy of readership or authorship.

Although I do not endeavor to determine true authorship of all early modern grimoires, the multitude of scholarship on witchcraft, cunning folk, spell-work, the appearance of corrupted Hebrew, and reproductions of grimoires attempting to fake or guess at the proper inscriptions on tools and talismans is in need of at least an attempt at comparative sources.

Specifically, the modern scholarly presentation of magical texts, such as Davies' does not scrutinize the information in a way that either challenges it or forces one to take a closer look at the origins and proliferation of the written forms contained within grimoires between 1400 and 1800. Furthermore, these scholars fail to discern or comment on what information is to be taken on faith and what is left for

⁷ Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* pp. 2, 82.

⁸ Pamela Allen Brown. *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England*, Cornell University Press, 2003.

⁹ Brown, p. 103. In contrast with Davies, p. 41.

scholarly debate. As we can understand that grimoires are in part a personal communication with the various listed deities, the empirical and provable aspects of the grimoires' directives are intimately wrapped within theologically prescribed "truths" that require discernment. Nowhere in scholarship do we see the acknowledgement of the elements of grimoires that are familiar to the initiated believer, driven by an understood relationship between the practitioner and the deity summoned, combined with the perspective of the practical or scientific method, engaged with tools described for the use within such processes. So far the two perspectives are divided, leaving the spiritual use and beliefs of grimoires outside the historical or scientific scholarly discussion, banned to the study of esotericism or religion, at a small number of universities.¹⁰ There currently exists an exhaustive scholarly collection on grimoire and witchcraft image examples, depicting a safe circle for operating within while the temptations of mortal sin or demonic forces is without.¹¹ Is this a generally understood concept of a magic circle? Were the Solomonic circles an indication of an esoteric but colloquially known practice in Europe?

The works of Wouter Hanegraaff and Nicholas Goodrick-Clark remain in the context of impressive historical esoteric theory alone rather than furthering the discussion and commentary on practicality and analytical use of materials or their construction, and proliferation. Although these scholars have added much to our

¹⁰ To my knowledge the Universities of Amsterdam, Exeter, Sorbonne, and Rice offer the only academic degree programs in Western Esotericism.

¹¹ Each Solomonic MS containing a magic circle indicates that they are for protection of the magus from outside demonic forces. See also: E.M. Butler, *Ritual Magic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949.

understanding of the social use of the intellectual properties of grimoires, they have not participated much in the discussion of materials or images as both religiously and scientifically valuable. Their expertise remains primarily within social institutions of power rather than the details of the depictions themselves.¹² The knowledge of how accessible and prolific this information may have been is still up for debate.

The current works that analyze the sources of Agrippa's books point toward the Abbot Trithemius of the early 1500s but stop there.¹³ The immense body of knowledge Agrippa provides remains neglected by many scholars, they do not seek sources for such thought beyond the Abbot Trithemius. Comparing several early modern Solomonic texts to earlier medieval sources that present similar symbolic representations of sigils can be a foundation for determining what institutional camps of thought exist in each grimoire and by which means they were disseminated.

In order to understand the hermetic and astrological contributions to early science, it becomes vital to scholarship to clearly discern what was thought of as uniform among the practitioners of the early modern period and what information may have been contested. The items found within each Solomonic text display the practical actions that may parallel other known religions or religious systems based

¹² Wouter Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy, Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Nicholas Goodrick-Clark, *The Western Esoteric Traditions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

¹³ Tyson, Donald, and James Freake, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, St. Paul, MN, U.S.A.: Llewellyn, 1993.

in utility.¹⁴ Within these proposed material pieces and described process for their creation, we can see the potential continuity of Hebraic, Egyptian, Byzantine and Islamic concepts of magic and the science presented by the early modern European practitioner. My previous research concerning forms of Latin shorthand, astrological material cultures and social movements in the early modern period, are a primary influence to inform my query in this study. Looking into Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* may be the beginnings of my evidence of early occult science's transference of manuscript into material cultures.¹⁵

I posit that the cycle of grimoires attributed to King Solomon, known as "Solomonic", were a repository for crypto-cultures and clandestine sciences whose origins began in antiquity and only saw greatest dissemination from the 16th century onward. I argue that the intellectual contents of grimoires were less of a linear continuation of static thought from antiquity and more a cumulative evolution of thoughts that demonstrated a compilation of works from several successive practitioners. With the works of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim and several figures of the early modern period, I intend to demonstrate that Agrippa's corpus was a primary source for most all Solomonic grimoires and that grimoires provided a medium for proliferation of cumulative knowledge that was outside any recognized narratives of theological and scientific behaviors between 1400 and 1800. Thus, grimoires provided a mutable or changeable proving ground for

¹⁴ We see in each grimoire altars to gods, candles for light and prayer, parchment for recording, incense, talismans for protection, ritual clothing and tools for consecration.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Chaucer's, *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, MS currently held by St John's College Library at the University of Cambridge, depicts an original design of an astrolabe on vellum, with ciphers for time of day. See: Geoffrey Chaucer, Walter W. Skeat, and Māshā'allāh. *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*. London: Pub. for the Early English Text Society, by N. Trübner, 1872.

experimental sciences through magical practices, and kept record of the works of practitioners who were in the forefront of medicine, science and occult arts.

The written forms of religious practices and material creation found in the grimoires are indicative of embedding philosophical beliefs of Greek, Egyptian, Jewish, Islamic, and Catholic origins. These forms of belief are readable most in the prescribed material objects and diagrams depicted within these texts. By clearly examining the evolution of these texts, one can determine which materials were viewed as practically or spiritually valuable to the continual operations of the practitioner or scientist. Additionally, through proliferation and use of these diagrams we can learn which ideas were deemed important enough to be transmitted into the hands of the reader through various print and manuscript forms or by the practices of the individual historical figures. Examining texts and intellectual pursuits in this manner can potentially uncover clandestine and cryptosocial religious groups that may have intended to utilize the culture of occult sciences for their own proliferation of beliefs.

Recognizing that many in early modern Europe feared heresy and persecution, the practitioners of these arts may have kept the materials out of physical form or created items easily destroyed upon suspicions. This comes to light particularly in what I will examine of the miniature, pure beeswax, evocation altars depicted in the *Almadel* chapter of the various Lesser Key of Solomon grimoires, Enochian wax sigils, and the construction of talismans of parchment in addition to metals, found within the all Solomonic cycle of texts.

Attempting to compile textual information, or find uniform origins, remains a

difficult task. The chief concern lies in determining what material is original to its proposed time period and what may have been transcribed from older texts no longer in existence. The remaining texts pertaining to the material cultures that were utilized by early modern practitioners may indicate the possibility of an anachronistic tendency to include material that was contemporary to multiple time periods and multiple regions.

Confusing belief with scholarly activity may have also created pseudo-scholarly accounts of historical applications that we can see among the translations of Samuel Mathers and Aleister Crowley Between 1888 and 1920. Although Mathers had access to and translated several manuscripts only available at the British Museum, he reworked several Solomonic talismans to include Hebrew that conformed to predisposed ideas about the meaning of corrupted Hebrew he encountered. In the case of the Mars talismans he reproduced, his may be correct assumptions. However the added Kabbalah sephiroth written in the Grand Pentacle in the frontispiece of his translation of the Key of Solomon may not be anything more than his own wishful thinking. No examples at present include the form of Hebrew Mathers reworked on the grand pentacle.¹⁶ This tendency by transcribers, to add their own assumptions may further obscure actual historical applications.¹⁷

Comparing the known English, Hebrew and Latin texts that depict the elements of Hermetic, evocational and folk-magic arts found within the works of H.C. Agrippa, John Dee and Edward Kelly, Robert Fludd, as well as the anonymous authors of the

¹⁶ See Mathers' 1889 *Key of Solomon* and compare with Français MS 14783, and the facsimile version of the anonymous *Les Clavicules De Salomon: Ou, Le Veritable Grimoire, Secretum Secretorum*, [Paris]: Belfond, 1972.

¹⁷ Mathers reworked several Solomonic talismans to include Hebrew that conformed to predisposed ideas about the meaning of corrupted Hebrew. In the case of the Mars Talismans he reproduced, this may be a correct assumption. However the added Kabbalah sephiroth written in the Grand Pentacle in the frontispiece of his translation of the Key of Solomon may not be anything more than his wishful thinking. No e

grimoires of the Solomonic cycle, describes much about the early modern allegiance with various beliefs of antiquity. How those thoughts manifest in social behaviors can inform us as to what may be found beyond the page and deeply rooted into intellectual pursuits in early modern Europe.

The primary source manuscripts, and printed texts, as well as secondary print sources from historical figures in the early modern period, discuss the outward universe depicted through depicted material objects. Examination of Owen Davies' work along with the annotated comparisons of some of the Solomonic texts provided by Joseph Peterson further assists in understanding the use of the content and potential timeline more effectively.

Comparing the information of various texts, and connections to known organized religious practices, as well as setting the information within the scope appropriate to its time period, leads to further knowledge of why the depicted materials were created. Parchment and metals used for talismanic purpose, their symbolic significance as well as vestments and personal behavioral and rituals observed, serve to contextualize the depictions in the texts. Explicating the importance of each depicted object forms an argument as to the origins of each, informs the historiography as to whether these images were particular to Pagan Europe, Christianized Europe, or through the influences of Jewish and Muslim migrations. Furthermore close examination remains important in determining the significance of each device and its proposed properties. Jewish mysticism and Kabbalistic names existing within several grimoires also demand an examination of

magical thought and practices, the differences between a scientific approach and that of a mystical one.

Working through the various conflicts of the definition of magic as opposed to mysticism, is necessary as I find conflicts in the term presented by multiple noted scholars. Since E.M. Butler, in her 1949 *Ritual Magic* has said at different points in the same book, that Solomonic magic was a portion of religion and related to the gods and that it also was a way for man to alter the physical universe, some terminology explication is necessary as well. The two main camps of thought remain: that magic is a product of the magus' activity, allowing the magus to alter the physical world, or it is a process of perspective thought, entered into by attempting to exist and interact harmoniously within the universe by an informed and educated engagement by the magus. Therefore differentiation between mystical or religious traditions and magical arts is additionally necessary in this study.

In Chapter One I will discuss these definitions of magic and modern interpretations of differences in what magical thinking was among various people. As a means to define what is now and what may have been understood about magical thinking remains imperative to understanding the purpose for each image described within the grimoires.

Chapter Two examines selected grimoires both in manuscript and print form, the actual images therein, comparisons of textual ciphers, and use of depicted objects found within selected grimoires. I will demonstrate similarities and consistencies as well as evidence as to origination of each. I will also show images that remain consistent among inconsistent surrounding literature of the grimoires.

Chapter Three is a presentation of symbolic imagery found within hermetic art at the beginning of the 16th century. I will compare several uses of images and use of non-textual devices. Focusing primarily on Giorgione, I will show how one Italian painter represented a complex corpus of esoteric thought in what was incorrectly heralded as the first landscape painting.

I will examine evidence of any ideas that came to fruition and use beyond textual representations in grimoires, any methods of use by figures, and how prolific the methods were. I will further endeavor to determine if the particular items produced or described were either latter products of organized religion or if they themselves influenced practices whose employment of such items may be ignorant of the origins and cultural comprehensions for each (as in the case of esoteric groups or orders).

Ultimately, my goal is to understand what was known of macrocosmic and outwardly expansive universe as it was found in the microcosmically representative material and print cultures of the grimoires. This helps us understand the values and processes by which the early modern magus operated, his beliefs, influences, and his magical employment of material objects made following the instructions of the grimoire. Through this, scholarship can be in position to comment more clearly on the history of the intellectual exchange of ideas that contributed to the motivations of political and social institutions of the early modern period.

Chapter One **Of Magic, Science, and Religion**

Magic, as a simple term does not necessarily communicate the nuanced use understood in the medieval or early modern periods. Explicating some concepts of magic among various social groups informs us as to the breadth of definitions or at least the implied reasoning surrounding magical use. This chapter will examine magic through the lens of a psychological or spiritual state of being, as well as that of a practical process aimed at physical means. Whether understood as a process granted through supernatural forces or that of natural powers intrinsically possessed or gained by a person, reading grimoires and understanding magical thinking requires further commentary I will provide here.

Natural magic is a term that indicates the belief that magic exists as 'natural' or purely within the realm of the physical world for the physical being, and operates by rules that govern nature. This concept is one that would be potentially supported by populist views of spell-craft or the consultations to the witchdoctor of popular lore. The treatment for disease, garnering of love, undoing a calamity, gaining riches, fending off enemies and anything else that man would encounter within the scope of their mortal lives, is the proposed domain that magic resides within. That it was natural, made from nature and of nature, alluded to the very core of the practical motivations for utilizing magic that the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski describes. Malinowski writes:

"The magical art is directed towards the attainment of practical aims. Like the other arts and crafts, it is also governed by a theory, by a

system of principles, which dictate the manner in which the act has to be performed in order to be effective. In analyzing magical spells, rites, and substances we have found that there are a number of general principles which govern them.”¹

Malinowski looks at magic from the perspective of one deeply entrenched within the scientific method in that Malinowski makes the claim that magic has to be an action, for “practical aims.” Magic this way indicates reliance upon a dutiful participation of the person and an action performed in the physical space in order to achieve the desired outcome. Taking the lead perhaps from the early modernists, Malinowski here equates the process of achieving a magical act with that of science, and then deems it comparable:

“Both Science and magic develop a special technique. In magic, as in the other arts man can undo what he has done or mend the damage, which he has wrought. In fact, in magic the quantitative equivalents of black and white seem to be much more exact and the effects of witchcraft much more completely eradicated by counter witchcraft than is possible in any practical art or craft.”²

Malinowski’s leaping claims here are evident. That a magical process, by virtue of simply being a non material action and thus not tangible, can more easily and completely become undone in compared to an art or craft, denies a few fundamental positions regarding magic. First one may consider magic an art or craft itself. This, although too easily negating the premise without justified support, does indicate the lack of personal investiture or experiential practice on the subject by Malinowski. Secondly, because Malinowski aims at calculated perspectives of magic

¹ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1954, p. 66

² Ibid pp. 66-67

being a physical act, performed by a person in physical space in the material world, to make a sweeping claim that all magic is easier to undo and eradicate the effects of witchcraft than that of any art or craft appears naive. I will allow for a more veteran scholar than I to comment effectively on the subject. Claude Levi-Strauss, though claiming to have a great respect for the work of Malinowski proceeds toward his own hypothesis of meaning by way of stepping away from the practical theory of Malinowski, and indicating a general conception of meaning conveyed among people without writing. Levi-Strauss notes that the problem he has with discussion of the magic and behaviors of civilizations with a magical or primitive mind is that in some way we immediately sense that it is lesser or without valid or scientific thought or reasoning. In opposition, he states:

“The first way was to consider such thinking as of a somewhat coarser quality, and in contemporary anthropology the example which comes to mind immediately is the work of Malinowski. ...and I'm not at all deriding his contribution. But nevertheless the feeling in Malinowski was that the thought of the people he was studying was, and generally speaking the thought of all the populations without writing which are the subject matter of anthropology was entirely, or is, determined by the basic needs of life.”

Levi-Strauss further states: “Whereas Malinowski's is a utilitarian conception, the other is an emotional or effective conception; and what I have tried to emphasize is that actually the thought of people without writing is, or can be in many instances, on the one hand, disinterested- and, on the other hand, intellectual.”³ Strauss makes a distinction that Magic in summation need not be classified as a lesser or coarser

3 Claude Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*, New York: Schocken Books, 1995, pp.15-16.

construct of civilization, but a product of particular life necessity, inherent to all societies.

The aspect of the mind is what is being discussed here. That a primitive or coarser mind can as effectively conceive a magical process as wholly spiritual or intellectual as well as utilitarian is in direct contrast to Malinowski's Platonic⁴ and privileged perspective that magic is only utilitarian in nature. Although I would argue for the validity of the effect of speech and a the culture of language, the written word here is determined to not necessarily influence the potential for intellectual thought on behalf of the so-called primitive society.

Although limited seemingly by Levi-Strauss' assertion that the working of magic is insulting to see as purely physical and utilitarian in use, the well-documented employ of physical items is well chronicled by E.E. Evans-Pritchard's writings about his time with the Azande.⁵ Oracle rubbing boards, chickens, spears and poisons, are but some of the tools required my Azande magicians to magically determine a person's wellbeing through a ritual divination or eradication of magical malevolence placed upon the practitioner.⁶ The entirety of the natural world is consulted, as it then becomes a magical world, equipped now with a dual meaning and purpose. The world of the Azande then shifts between the known utility and the metaphysical transcendence that its magical use provides. When the same concepts of material items possessing magical properties are then applied to folk talismans

⁴ Derek Beales, *Enlightenment and Reform in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, London: I.B. Taurus, 2005 p.28 "The notion of the Philosopher King comes from Plato's *Republic*."

⁵ Evans-Pritchard, [1937] *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*. Oxford University Press. 1976.

⁶ Evans-Pritchard pp. 120-145.

and religious amulets throughout the world we may possibly see where someone like Malinowski can originate such overgeneralization of magic being a purely material and physically utilitarian interest.

Use of physical items to work magic and change the relationship of the physical world to that of the divine would be most readily available to understand if we see religion as a vehicle for the tools contained therein to work magic. The church relics collected by Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches are, for example, a testimonial to the physical world having direct, and arguably magical effect on both the spiritual world and the individual, the end result of which was to aid the physical person with some kind of identifiable change inspired by the inherent capabilities of the individual object. If a hair from the head of a saint was to come into contact with a person, or if they were to pray upon it, the individual would expect that through the inherent divine nature of the physical object itself, one's own faith in that divinity, combined with the stored powers contained within the relic, a miraculous exchange of power, or magical act as we could call it, would be enhanced.⁷ Religion has this notion of transference of power that is outside the purview of science, deeply embedded in the fabric of how it maintains a mythos to the aspirant that seeks that particular dogmatic cultural institution. As Evans-Pritchard's work with the Azande can attest, it may be fair to think that the primitive understanding of people attempting to understand the complexity of the magical

⁷ Sir E. A. Wallis Budge Kt, *Amulets and Superstitions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930, p. 26; Charles R. Beard, *Lucks and Talismans*, London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co. LTD, 1938, pp. 28-33.

arrangement may outweigh the final assessment of the primitive notion of the given culture examined!

Turning to the famed work of filmmaker and anthropologist, Maya Deren in the 1940s, we have a unique depiction of the people of Haiti able to experience a portion of this magical process within the veneration and constant interaction with their gods. Vodou, as Deren notes, consists of a complex, and ever changing relationship with the Loa, or Gods, as they understand them to be. Each household, person, community and congregation of various sects, has their own associated grouping of deity in which to consult for divination, or magical purpose. Curing of the sick, mitigation of relationships, forecasting weather, or making war, each participant of that sect is deeply immersed in the myth and physical practice of the transference of magical power from the Loa to the individual. Deren Writes:

“The Loa, whose function is to direct the enormous primal mass of the material universe into patterns of intelligence and benevolence, are involved in a great and endless labor. It is their moral energy that animates this huge hulk of matter, and so, since that energy is constantly expended it must constantly be replenished. And this is man's duty: to feed the Loa, to insure the constant flow of the psychic energy, to assure the moral movement of the universe.”⁸

Rituals such as the feeding of the Loa play a vital role in establishing a community's sense of connection with each other as well as their representation of their relationship to the divine. To engage in ritual was to take part in the divinity itself. It serves to further solidify the bounds of the society and provide an expected, perhaps scientific, understanding of the parameters of the known universe. Life

8 Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, New York: MacPherson, 1953, p. 209.

becomes defined by the limits of one's own relationship with the known world as well as the divine. The process by which man relates to each other, the world and the divine, as a regularly expected and desired outcome, is a communally understood constant, generally accepted as a provable science among them. The belief that their deity exists and has a notion to care about their wellbeing forms the crux of their religious understanding. The actions that move the person's consciousness through the natural world to that of the divine is magic.

Outside of Vodou alone there have been many attempts to reconcile the relationship of magic to science by way of physicians who have made strides to comprehend the healing arts. For example, Wouter Hanegraaff writes about the 18th century astrologer-physician, Ebenezer Sibly:

“...Sibly was a very late heir of Renaissance polymaths like Athanasius Kircher and Robert Fludd, but, interestingly, he was entirely familiar with the new scientific literature as well, and was seriously trying to combine their perspectives. In his personal life he worked as a physician and was involved in Swedenborgianism and Freemasonry, and while his emphasis was very clearly on astrology, his large compilations gave his readers access to the much wider context of Renaissance *Philosophia Occulta*.”⁹

Nicholas Goodrick-Clark attested that the material world is essentially a vehicle in which the unseen forces reside; that the aspects that are finite and measurable are coexistent with those, which are inherently unknowable or incomprehensible, yet felt or understood in some way.

9 Hanegraaff p. 237, 8

What can we glean about understanding the convoluted and often confusing notions of the relationship of magic science and religion? How does that leave the modern student in terms of any application of such thoughts? Understanding aspects of the physical world that are measurable, predictive, and finite allows Science to communicate truth to us in that particular perspective. Science though thorough and quantitative won't answer other questions nor can it posit the possibility of any understanding outside the known universe. In turn the aspects of Magic within religion come into play in that as Paracelsus states concerning the origin of man:

“God created man directly from the matrix. He took him from the matrix and made a man of him... And then he gave him a matrix of his own-woman...To the end that henceforth there may be two of them, and yet only one; two kinds of flesh, and yet only one, not two. This means that neither of them is perfect alone, that only both together are the whole man...”¹⁰

This matrix is the field that is imagined that makes the universe possible. It is the religious notion that an anthropomorphic God pulls man from a universe that is already of him. That man already 'is' and is then brought forth from a universe of possible and created life. Man and woman are essentially understood one and therefore are inseparable as a spiritual, and then as Paracelsus asserts, and physical entity. How are we to view such a matrix? How can we access it? These are the domains of magic and injected into a theologically understood science of rational proportions. That we attempt to understand a universe beyond or before created

¹⁰ Jolande Jacobi (Ed.), *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, Princeton University Press, 1951, p. 23.

space complicates our thoughts on what the matrix would then be according to Paracelsus. We may never know how to see the matrix but that it has a suggested creative property among men and women and that man gets his own matrix upon creation of woman, has Paracelsus informing us that there are potential knowable and unknowable or aspects to the unseen universe. The practice of magic then become the engagement in attempting to both know and take part in processes of the unseen and invisible universe directed at a desired outcome.

Rituals and practices, as exhibited through the Azande oracles and the Haitian Vodou practitioner, give us practice in viewing the utilitarian aspect of the magical or scientific work being sought, as Malinowski would conclude. The Hermetic philosophy of Fludd and his contemporaries as compared to modern science can address some of the largest concepts of determining reality and the comprehension of magic, science and religion by addressing the very matrix discussed above. The matrix is then the very same 'all' spoken of in the *Kybalion* by Three Initiates. 'The All' as described by the Hermetics is unknowable but merely 'is'. The *Kybalion* states: "So you see, the matter is unthinkable, just as The All is unknowable. Just as we say The All merely 'Is', we are compelled to say, The All acts because it acts."¹¹

Hermetic philosophy states that the fabric of the universe is a collective convergence of thought that forms matter and is compelled to create. Therefore if we are truly a part of one and the very same point of time-space and if we are repeatedly and conceptually over-layered upon ourselves, in that; every-one and

11 Three Initiates, *The Kybalion: Hermetic Philosophy*, Chicago: Yogi Publishing, 1940, p.108.

every thing that exists in the known world is then seen as one, or understood as one. We could then begin to conceive what a collective consciousness would be. The idea that we can share the same time space as another is confusing and outside the purview of this brief analysis. As a fixed point on a theoretical two-dimensional plane we are insignificant. Yet if the plane or matrix is somehow everywhere at every time or even if bent in a sphere, it would then be possible for the oroborus to be a depiction of a linear, temporal slice-world in a three dimensional world existence. The oroborus would then have the potential of slipping through the conventions of the finite world and present itself finally as existence and as a renewal and regrowth of the known universe. It is within the working area of the magus in as depicted in the grimoires themselves that we will see the use of this circularly emphasized world. It will be here in this temporally isolated position that we learn of measures to affect physical outcomes in several arenas.

The purpose, and understanding of diagnostic and treatment procedures within wellness and medicine, for instance, may lend itself to confusion on what actually is being treated and how. The science and philosophy supporting each perspective is at times drastically at odds with the other, existent with completely separate definitions of physiology as well as purpose and function of the individual's body itself. While there are disparate and seemingly incongruent understandings between each philosophical camp, it remains a question of whether they are each adaptable or comprehensible to each other and whether they are communicative across the parameters of their functions.

Taking a moment to consider the relative perspectives of Near Eastern practices of the to that of the medicine of the early modern European, we may see the possibility of an understanding within the scientific process of the early modern physician that may exhibit the potential for each perspective to be harmoniously present in a singular practice. Holistic thought was just that: of the whole; that the entire cosmological universe was present within the body of the person and equally without, whilst simultaneously comprised of the known environmental relationships of the world.¹² While the Egyptian Hermetic wellness philosophy generally concerns itself with an understood relationship of the body to allegorical, and perhaps magically literal understanding of appeasing their concept of holistic approach to wellness, and certainly diagnostics, the western body of knowledge was just that: related to the human body. Given that the early modern European Humanist was concerned primarily with the self as it was seen as a divine emanation, the physician or theologian saw the potential for forces greater than that of the physical self to be present and influential to the collective wellness of the person. It was with this in mind that the materials and exchange of devices to bring about magical operations were disseminated among the most learned and most powerful.

Whether through medical or spiritual motivations, Magic assumes the properties of that which are not ascribed to science but still need to be considered within the consciousness of the aspirant. If magic is a process to rid one of

12 Hermetic Philosophy as described within the *Kybalion* by Three Initiates, an exposition of the earlier tracts of hermetic philosophy ascribed to the “Emerald Tablet of Hermes” in Trithemius’ 1514 *Annales Hirsaudienses* and the 1616 anonymous print of the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rozenkreutz*, a hermetic and alchemical text from Germany.

symptomatic responses to illness then we could see it to be wholly utilitarian. However if we understand magical thinking as the understood relationship to the medical symptoms, and then the relationship of the person to a given ailment changing through the process, we then have to acknowledge a change that is not entirely related to the sickness or the physically ascribed treatment. If the result then is wellness more than what is empirically possible has to be considered. Reduced to one's personal perspective or even purely imaginative, magic's conceptual interactions with supernatural forces, deities and intangible or non-physical aspects of the universe allow at least an understanding of how to classify that which is unknowable. That one can engage in manipulations of the known physical world through processes of the invisible or intangible, allows for a power dynamic whereby the practitioner of the particular magic has control over creation. That magic is a craft whereby the process is itself the art, speaks more to the human investiture of the act more than the result. Here we then see magic as a potential evolution of actions or thoughts rather than a static outcome. In this sense the magician then assumes god-like powers transforming him into an agent of the supernatural and creative process within the universe.

Chapter Two

Grimoire Texts, Geometric Symbols, Ciphers and Use

My goal here is to explore the content of grimoire texts written between the 14th and 18th centuries. I want to explore consistencies of practice amidst differing language groups and regions. I drew mainly from sources available to me rather than through translation. However in some cases either certain manuscripts were unavailable or so similar as to determine them redundant. I chose manuscripts and print versions of Solomonic grimoires that show similarities across several languages. Written primarily in Greek, Latin, French, English, Italian and Hebrew these texts are currently found mainly between 1300-1800. The bulk of the current manuscripts fall within the 16th century, while some do certainly originate from much early prototypes.

In some cases I will discuss inscriptions and compare them as Peterson, Crowley and Mathers have done, but I approach such data more from an academic perspective than that of a practitioner as a means to clearly determine, without literary or spiritual bias, the presentation of each image in the text and how they were utilized. There is little discussion of the social value of specific objects depicted within the grimoires or their cultural importance to various groups. We don't know the specifics about who authored certain manuscripts and the absence of clear claim of authorship speaks to the clandestine histories of each. As has long been known to scholarship, I will additionally reinforce that information contained within each grimoire presented a secret knowledge, truly occult and hidden from the eyes of the

masses, authorless, and potentially dangerous to anyone found practicing the specifics within.

A central finding of this chapter is the claim that knowledge of every version of the Solomonic cycle is not as important as the understanding of the function of materials repeatedly depicted within. While there is a concerned effort among the scholarly community to find a particular definitive translation and determine if it is correct or not based on orthography or resources available to the editors, any attempt at determining the correctness of their contents are outside this study.

Available and utilized manuscripts remain my chief interest, as they would be the most prolific and potentially the most widely read. Although the accuracy of intellectual exchange remains of great interest me, I find the proliferation of specific practices as important due to the action of the social groups in possession of such textual information.

If a lineage can be determined to a common source text, so be it. However, if we see the magical directives within as an act with potential medical, spiritual or political outcomes that are shared by multiple regions, we have the opportunity to venture into the motivations and perspectives of the ones who would have been most interested in the use and proliferation of these texts and manuscripts. Below I present the texts and their languages that I have primarily used in this study.

I. Manuscripts

The following are several manuscripts both available at the time of this research and most similar in structure and contents. Some were previously noted in

translated editions while others have remained in obscurity until now. Although I have not discovered any new manuscripts, it is worthy to include that some of the previously known manuscripts are poorly understood or were left out of scholarly discussion until this time. Similar enough in form and in the depictions of various images, the comparisons between the currently available texts, in translated and edited form, provide a potentially new intellectual source to the knowledge of certain material cultures contained within (that I will expand upon later). For now, I present the consulted manuscripts in their various languages with brief summaries.

Greek

Harleian 5596. Currently at the British Library this is 15th century and possibly one of the oldest Solomonic manuscripts. Bound as a 58-folio vellum manuscript containing multiple early renditions of 24 pentacles crudely drawn. It contains an early squared magic circle, in addition to several astrological tables. This particular MS suggests links with much of the Solomonic cycle and contains early magical fonts found also among the 72 scripts in the 1616 “Virga Aurea” by James Bonaventure Hepburn of Rome and expounded upon by Adam McLean in the out-of-print 1980 edition of the “Hermetic Journal”¹. This manuscript has been described the “prototype for the entire Solomonic genre”.²

¹ Adam McLean, *Hermetic Journal*, 1980. Now found as a CD-rom though the alchemy web bookshop www.levity.com/alchemy. Note that the Virga Aurea may be a latter reproduction and expansion of Trithemius’ *Polygraphiae* from 1518.

² Peterson, *Key of Solomon*, p. 2

French

1) Francais MS 14783, BnF: (sic) *CLAVICVLE DE SALAMON, MISE DE LATIN AN FRANSOIS ET RANGEE SELON LORDER DES MATIERES TIREE DE DEVS LIVRES ET DICEVS MISSE TOVT AN LHON POVR PLEVS FACILE INTELIGANCE*. Dated to 15th century, this manuscript is the earliest French version I have found. Unknown to any modern edition or translation, and only recently available as an online copy from the Bibliotheque national de France (BnF), it appears to be one of the earliest of the Solomonic manuscripts to depict a Sigil Dei Ameth on the front pages. Although painstakingly produced in clearly legible script, the Sigil is inconsistent with the following depictions, in the same manuscript, of circles that are crudely drawn. Additionally a portion of the Sigil extends beyond the page in an almost decorative suggestion rather than practical usage. Variations in spellings, mistakes crossed out throughout the text, and combined Latin and French narratives suggest this to be a probable copy of another manuscript. No pentacles beyond basic magic circle constructs are found depicted within.

2) Francais 25314, BnF: *Les Clavicules de Salomon; Traduit de l'hebreux en langue latine par le rabin Abognazar et mis en langue vulaire par M. Barault, archeveque d'Aries. 1634*. This 141 folio manuscript outlines the same format depicted by the latter Mathers and Crowley editions and corrected by Peterson, although this manuscript appears to be previously unknown to them in 1888 or went without comment, and is only known here through recent digital efforts by the BnF. The manuscript begins with one Grande Pentacle in the manner of the

aforementioned editions and shows 45 fully formed, well-drawn and legible pentacles with several additional empty circles near the final pages.

3) *La Clavicule de Salomon* -A 1972 facsimile of the French MS written in 1641³. Author unknown, this text was originally from the private library of the famed Rosicrucian Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897) of Paris. This is bound as 171 pages without commentary or footnotes and does not include the introduction by Francoise Ribadeau Dumas found in other editions mentioned by Joseph Peterson.⁴ Written in French cursive throughout, the manuscript contains 33 well-drawn pentacles, as well as tool diagrams and cabbalistic inscriptions. In several places the Hebrew font used is badly reproduced from the standard block-print Hebrew to that of a stylized almost cursive Hebrew. Hence, many of the angelic names are badly transcribed with several containing completely corrupted characters, or non-standardized spellings of angelic names.

4) Francais 24244, BnF: *La Grande Clavicule de Salomon Filis De David, [sic]Roy Des Israelites, qu'il donna A son fils Roboam En Hebreux original, Traduite De [sic]Cahathave, D'Egiptien, En Latin par Mescere pere Hermite dans la Montagne des olives, l'an 1040*. The title depiction is that of an Hermit's testimonial in 1040 but we know this manuscript now to be from the 18th century. Although possibly linked to an earlier cabbalistic tradition and much older manuscripts, the BnF catalogs this particular manuscript as dating to no earlier than the 1700s. One of the Abraham Colorno translations, it follows the French compositions utilized in by both Samuel

³ Unknown, *Les Clavicules De Salomon : Ou, Le Veritable Grimoire, Secretum Secretorum*, [Paris]: Belfond, 1972.

⁴ Peterson lists in his edition of Mathers' translation a 1980 printing of this French manuscript "introduction par Francois Ribadeau Dumas : 16p Reprod."

Mathers and Aleister Crowley, and cited frequently by Joseph Peterson in numerous works. It is unclear if this particular manuscript is known to, or has been previously cited by, any of the works of these editors. It may be that this is a newly revealed manuscript recently available through digital public domain of the BnF. I include it here as a remarkably legible and neatly produced manuscript of 53 folios back to back. It contains a depiction of the Magic Circle of the Art as well as only a few atypical pentacles not found in the other Colorno translations. The assortment of planetary pentacles found in other manuscripts is not present.

Italian

1) “La Clavicola del Re Salomon” – A latter and rare 1750 printed version allegedly by Peter Mora with the title “Zekerboni” but found in the Bodleian MS Aub 24.⁵ No authorship is listed on the edition I consulted but the parent Aub24 was a manuscript known to S.L. Mathers for his work in the English translation and presentation of the genre. Neatly printed with 40 astrological pentacles, this contains a table for the necessary tools and is bound in 119 pages with hard cardstock end pages. This copy combines Italian, Latin, and Hebrew in several places and incorporates astrological signs as abbreviations amidst the printed narrative.⁶ It is clearly a combination of various influences although the drawings are easier to read than several counterparts in both print and manuscript form. This

⁵ Cited in Petersons, *Key of Solomon*

⁶ The practice of astrological abbreviated glyphic representation, in the case of shorthand pictograms, is commonplace in several later Masonic ritual ciphers printed in the early 1900s but originating from the older 1800s rituals. See: “*Ecce Oriente, National Series, I W.B., Arranged Strictly in Accordance with The Standard Formula, Ipsissimus Verbis*”, The Redding Masonic Supply Co. Inc 200 Fifth Avenue New York 10, N. Y. 1909.

edition claims its own historical lineage in the manner of listing an associative, albeit chronologically out-of-order timeline of similar texts in the following manner:

“ Pietro d’Abano : “Heptameron” [Seven Days], 1535
‘Il Libro Delle Ombre’ [The book of Shadows], 1573
‘Il Drago Rosso’ [The Red Dragon], 1521
‘La Clavicola del Re Salomone [The Key of Solomon the King] – La Vera Magia Nera [The Real Black Magic]’, 1740.”

2) The second Italian MS is the Leipzig MS Cod.mag.71 “[Sic] Clavicola di Salomone tradatti dalla lingua hebraica dal dotissimo Mathematico Melchior d’Egypto”. This 1750 MS contains curious arrangements of what may be alchemical abbreviations. The pentacles are few and only contain simple symbols with either transliterated Greek or the appearance of planetary angelic sigils. In some cases we see the Hebraic acronym AGLA (Attah Gibor Leolam Adonai) with various simple intersections of lines. One pentacle deviates from such simplicity and is the largest of the set, containing Hebrew, Latin, and Malachim scripts.

Hebrew

From the library of Hermann Gollancz a 1914 exact facsimile of his Hebrew Manuscript “Sepher Maphteah Shelomo (Book of the Key of Solomon)” was compiled and printed in 300 copies only. It dates to around 1700 and is a mix of Sephardic Hebrew with transliterated Latin and Greek. Although likely a later copy, contents of this manuscript contain curious images not found in any other manuscript and are closest to some of the earlier Greek prototypical pentacles. No full translation of the entire manuscript yet exists. Stephen Skinner had expounded on Gollancz’s original preliminary comments of this manuscript although nothing

more than Gollancz's minimal translations of select passages currently exist. Of most value are the representations of circles and pentacle contents, their astrological attributes and extensive, neatly written sigils and cabbalistic scripts for planets and angelic orders.

Misc. Print Editions

I have found no examples of early modern English language manuscripts within the Solomonic genre. Here I include several texts that were known to most of early modern and modern practitioners and scholars. Widely available, they would be the sources that compiled such manuscript contents and more widely disseminated them to various social groups throughout England and continental Europe. Included as well are late 19th and 20th century translations and editions that will serve to illuminate which manuscripts and methods were most widely known and accessible to both the scholar and lay person. For genealogical purposes of each text they will serve to inform us about library resources and continual awareness of the Solomonic cycle of occult sciences and possible origins of various operations.

I have chosen to consult the *The Key of Solomon (The King)* and *Lesser Key of Solomon* translations by Mathers in 1889, Crowley in 1903 and Peterson in 2001.⁷ I also consulted both the original Latin 1533 text *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres* Found in within the inventory of John Dee's library at Mortlake, before any English translation was available,⁸ Agrippa's work informed much of Dee's own as well as

⁷ See Joseph Peterson's *Key of Solomon*, his edition of Mathers' *Key of Solomon* and Aleister Crowley's 1903 *Lesser Key of Solomon*, as well as Mather's own 1889 translation of the *Key of Solomon*

⁸ Roberts, Julian, John Dee, and Andrew G. Watson, *John Dee's library catalogue*. Oxford University

the beginnings of early sciences in the 16th century. I also used the English translation by James Freake, edited and annotated by Donald Tyson in 1993.⁹ Agrippa's text is likely the most important of the entire western esoteric tradition, as well as being the source work for countless latter operations, manuscripts and texts. Cited in numerous works from John Dee to the modern era, Agrippa's compilation of natural philosophy, botany, geomancy, astrology, magic, divination, evocations, etc., served as the benchmark for the occult arts. At 596 pages in its Latin form, Tyson's translated and annotated English edition at over 930 pages shows the extent of the body of work compiled by Agrippa that was made available in print form throughout Europe.¹⁰ I made use of both editions. I used the Latin version for correct presentation of figures and the Tyson version for the neatly arranged tables. Additionally I've consulted Robert Turner's 1655 English translations attributed to Peter de Abano's *Heptameron*, an early account of circle and lamen use as well as angelic script,¹¹ John Dee's *Five Books of Mystery* from 1582, a total experiment of angelic evocation utilizing Dee's Enochian language, altars and wax magic circles,¹² and finally the Guth/ Dehn translation of Abraham Von Woms' *The Book of Abramelin* (1387-1427?), an early account of magic square use and evocational arts.¹³ Rather than seeking to analyze what is clearly a well-researched series of translations, annotated and referenced, I will utilize these

Press, USA, 1990.

⁹ See Donald Tyson, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*

¹⁰ Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* from 1533.

¹¹ Pietro Abano, *Heptameron or Magical Elements*, 1555 as seen with improvements, 1783.

¹² John Dee, *Five Books of Mystery*, Peterson ed., Weiser Books, 2006.

¹³ Worms, Dehn, Guth translation of *Abramelin*, Ibis Press 2001.

English books to show how scholars have treated certain pieces and how that compares with my own findings outside of the English translations.

II. The Magic Circle and Square

Various magic circles exist in each of the manuscripts. Some appear to be utilized as a form of amulet worn outside the garments of the practitioner, where others are to either be inscribed on various metals or written on parchment. In a few instances I will show, we can see them appearing as the formation of the space in which a practitioner is to conduct the operations. These take the form of drawn flooring, a carpet of sorts or a separate focal point in which to gaze upon the “experiment”.¹⁴

One of the most prolific items depicted in print or manuscript form throughout the whole of the western esoteric tradition is the magic circle. Used as either a space for the magus to stand within or a depiction upon an amulet worn by or held by the magus, the circles take on a relatively formulaic presentation in all the aforementioned texts. Importantly, the texts consulted in this study look primarily at the circles that stem from a Hebraic origin in textual form but may not be limited to such ethnicity. Combined with Latin, Italian, French and even Greek, these circles’ function in different texts appears more alike the more we understand their

¹⁴ Latter Solomonic texts use the word “experiment” to describe the constructed processes for evocations depicted within the grimoires. “Experiment” may be a corruption of “experience” rather than “experiment”. The word “Operation” followed “experience” in 1634 and changed to “experiment” with Ebenezer Sibley’s 1790s MS of the Key of Solomon as reproduced by Frederick Hockley in *Clavis or Key to the Magic of Solomon*, (Sibley, Hockley, Peterson edition, Ibis Press, 2001), and continued as far as Mathers’ and translations and editions in 1889. See also: BnF, 1400-1500 Français MS 14783 fols. 112-120 as “Experience” (ex’perience); 1634 Français MS 25314 Fol. 40, 41, 60, 75, as “operation” (op’ration); Also as “test” (experimentum) in the BnF Latin MS 14075 Fol. 103.

purpose and what information is intended to be depicted. Although corrupted and badly reproduced in several manuscripts enough is known about the proposed writings on each, within a few of the older versions, to be able to glean at least the intent of the latter corrupted versions. In a few cases we can see authors' license within the text that deviate wholly from early versions. I find it helpful to trace some of the pictorial genealogy in order to understand the similarity of use by various social groups.

Looking through each of the aforementioned manuscripts, similarities between several texts suggest a common ancestry whereas drastic differences complicate the genealogy of the various texts despite other similarities that are pervasive throughout the Solomonic cannon of texts. In this section various circles show similarities in use and construction while others completely differ in form despite sharing a similar name and depicted use.

Beginning with the earliest of the circles examined, we can see in Fig 2 a simple form depicted that includes an outline of various characters in a rotation around the outermost circumference of each circle sometimes containing a Latin psalm-like, versicle form. Inside, each commonly shows a depictions of a curious symbols or basic geometric shapes.

Visually the circles can be broken into parts that can be seen as freestanding, purposeful constructions. Moving from the outside circumference inward, we find several forms that remain wholly unique while others are uniform and consistent throughout the consulted texts.

Simply, this appears as a circle drawn on the furthest perimeter of the working area. Seen commonly as the outside edge of the circle that is drawn in the texts, it can be the edge of the device as projected for construction by the magus. Whether seen as drawn upon the ground to stand within, on a hand held metallic surface, or as a piece upon an altar for scrying purposes,¹⁵ the size and limit of the circle is portrayed here. As simple as this circular ring may seem, as perhaps unremarkable or obvious to any two-dimensional construction, this circular construction is vitally important to both the safety of the magus as well as the completion of the device. The Solomonic grimoires all state that the magus must create a circle and not cross or exit the circle until the workings of the magic are completed. Within the circle the magus is safe from the corruptive influences and dangers of the spirits they conjure. Additionally, within the circle they assume authority over any spirit.

The depictions of the magic circle from Gollancz and Heptameron we see striking similarities that would indicate a common relationship of origin. Each magic circle is comprised of four concentric circles radiating outward from a center point divided into equal quadrants. These four circles create three rings of space in which various writing presents as either angelic, or evocational script for deity, leaving a fourth center circle, quartered by perpendicular lines radiating from the center point, in which each quarter contains further inscriptions. If we examine the Gollancz version beginning with the top right innermost quadrant and rotating that innermost section counterclockwise as we read, we see the Hebrew for AL in the

¹⁵ Divination or fortune telling achieved through interaction with material objects or physical processes.

top right and Pha in the top left. Moving to the bottom right of the center circle we then continue with, ET and then to the bottom left with ON.

The *Heptameron* by Abano follows almost exactly except that we now read the letters in Latin from left to right and begin in the top left of the innermost circle with AL and then to the top right with PHA. We then see in the bottom left of the center circle of Heptameron the letters ET and then the bottom right with the Greek letter for Omega. We arrive then at a resemblance then between the two that spells Alpha et Omega, or the first and the last.

In the next ring radiating outward from the center of the Gollancz circle, in the upper left quadrant of the ring, are the Hebrew letters for the Greek “Tetragrammaton”, which indicates the four lettered name of Deity often spelled IHVH or YHVH. Anglicized, this is commonly spelled Yahweh or Jehovah. In the upper right quadrant of the ring we see the Hebrew ADNI or Adonai, the generic name for God in Hebrew. In the lower right ring there is the Hebrew for the acronym AGLA. The lower left quadrant of the ring spells ALHI or Eloy. This exact arrangement and placement of the names within quadrants is found in the Heptameron. The final piece is the sigil for Michael found in both in the second ring from the center. This sigil is clearly present in earliest form from Agrippa’s works, the Heptameron, and early KOS texts.

We conclude that despite the Hebrew of the Gollancz version, due to the spelling of the Greek word “Tetragrammaton” rather than the Hebrew spelling of “IHVH” it undoubtedly has a Greek intellectual origin or association. Furthermore by

uncanny similarity of the form of construction the circle is therefore related to the Heptameron.

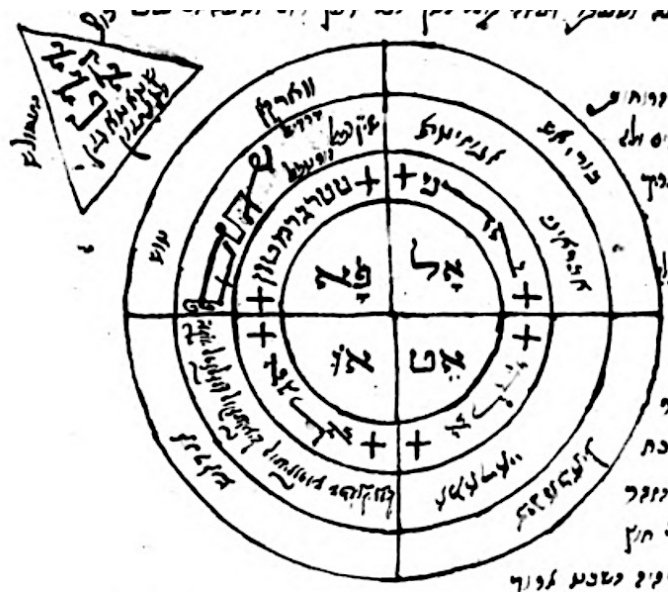


Figure 2.1 : The Magic circle as presented on folio 40 within the 1914 facsimile transcription and compilation of the 18th century manuscript *Sepher Maphteah Shelomo* (book of the Key of Solomon) An exact facsimile of an original book of magic in Hebrew. With illustrations now produced for the first time by Hermann Gollancz. Note the similarity to Abano's Heptameron.



Figure 2.2: A 15th century magic circle from the *Heptameron* by Peter Abano, as it appeared in the pseudo-Agrippa *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*.

Of note are the depictions of the Heptameron influenced texts whereby the circumference is surrounded by concentric rings and sometimes a larger encompassing square. (see Fig. 2.3) The squared outer area seems secondary in most texts and although angelic names for protection are inserted within the sides, the boundary of the circle is the more important barrier observed by name alone. Italian and French Solomonic texts reference a construction of the circle or simply state the “circle”.¹⁶ The square in this manner appears as a secondary boundary not universal throughout the genre. These circles relatively follow the same ordering of names as the Gollancz and Heptameron magic circles.

Alternately we do see examples of a combined magic square and circle whereby the working area is both straight and rounded with either a complete absence of circle at the center or is a square with within a circle, present for the magus to operate within. Such is the case of one within the 1584 publication of the Heptameron inspired, [sic] *A Discoverie of Witchcraft* from Reginald Scot.¹⁷

¹⁶ For examples see the Italian *Clavicola del Re Salomone* p. 52, as “Cerchio” (circle), as well as the clearly and solely circular construction within the 1634 *BnF MS Français 25314*, Fol. 85.

¹⁷ Ibid.

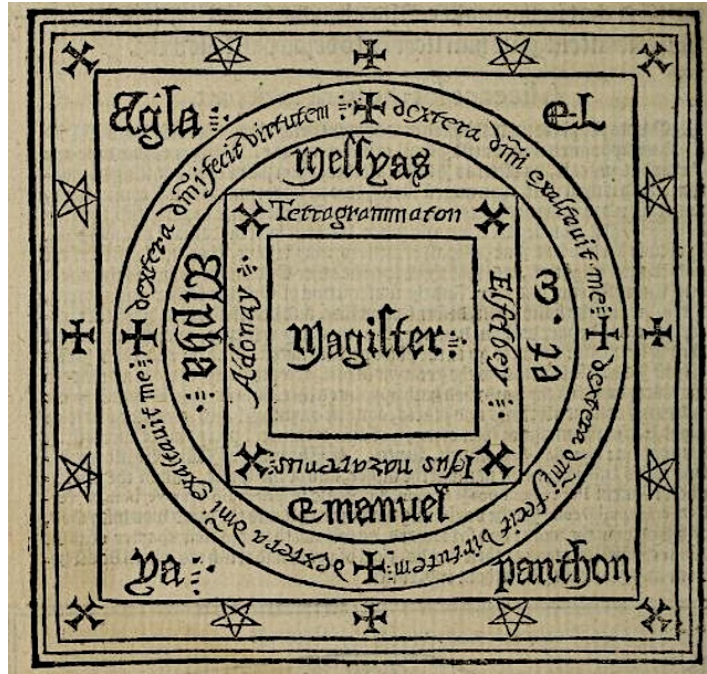


Figure 2.3: Reginald Scot's squared Magic Circle from his 1584 *Discouerie of Witchcraft*.

E.M. Butler discusses the relationship of the squared circles as being akin to the fabled magic carpet used in Solomonic legend.¹⁸ She posits that although confused as a means to both contain spirits and achieve flight, the carpet-like depictions are more readily emphasized in the Greater Key of Solomon texts. Here the magus can safely step upon the consecrated surface designated for the circle, for the duration of the ceremony consisting of the magus' control over demons.¹⁹ Although potentially viewed as unfounded speculation I am curious about any further connections outside this study to the alchemical notion of squaring the circle, as a visual depiction of the philosopher's stone. Since we know of the early

¹⁸ Retold in the fable *One Thousand and One Nights* and origins explained in the Jewish Legend of Solomon's Carpet. See: www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13842-solomon.

¹⁹ E.M. Butler, pp.60-61, 79 Butler discusses the 1-4 century *Testament of Solomon*, recognized by Butler, and others she notes, as one of the earliest texts suggesting Solomon's evocation and control over demons.

17th century *Atalanta Fugiens* by Michael Maier²⁰ in which he shows several images of a squared circle, the need to determine the plausibility of a connection may be appropriate.

Inside the outer boundary, several examples of divine writing are commonly present for protective means primarily. In some instances they are presented as Latin or Latin-derived versicles usually borrowed from Christian Psalms. The source manuscripts for Mathers' compilation of Key of Solomon texts show Latin Versicles whereas the Peterson editions show both Hebrew and Latin for various Psalms.²¹ Otherwise they are found containing various forms of angelic names associated either with the day of the week, the ruling planet, as in Olympic spirits,²² or as variations of Hebraic angels and sephiroth of the Kabbalah.²³ The desire for the magus to depict astrological influences by way of angelic and deity names and to associate these to psalms of the bible or more widely known names of God, remains apparent.

Various polygons exist within the inner area of the circles. Of note are the proportionally even pentagrams, hexagrams, and heptagrams that may appear at times together in the same image in the texts.²⁴ These figures hold intrinsic values to the magus and the perceived participants in the operations depicted. The counterpart to these is the triangle. Usually only seen as a device for containment of

²⁰ Michael Maier. "Atalanta Fugiens. Oppenheim: 1617." *Trans. and transc. Clay Holden, Hereward Tilden and Peter Branwin.* < <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/atalanta.html> (1964).

²¹ Compare the images of Aubrey MS 24, with those of the Sloane and Italian MSS.

²² Olympic spirits are detailed at length within the *Arbatel* and *Heptameron* texts.

²³ The Tree of Life within Kabbalah contains 10 spheres of existence, associated with or ruled by angelic orders and god-names, often shown as a stylized tree.

²⁴ The Sigil Dei Aemeth is one such image repeatedly extant with all polygons combined to form a single pentacle. See: John Dee's Sigil, Fig. 16.

spirits or to allow them to physically appear before the magus, the triangle remains both a binding and containment area for spirits and is kept within separate location from that of the circle or square. Found outside the working area of the magus, the triangle thus remains outside the sphere of protection of the magus, provided by the angelic names and the edge of the working area.

Various languages present themselves in the center as the most connected with the operation and the magus. In the case of a hand held amulet or lamen, the script often is of unknown origin or highly corrupted in its small-size reproductions. Some cases present as combinations of several languages mixed together or transliterated languages from Greek to Hebrew or Latin. We can even observe the created magical languages mixed with other fonts to create a new script encoded into the center of the circle or throughout the entire image.²⁵ Evidence of corrupted script, backward letterings and reversal of sigils, suggests that many scribes did not understand the information present and reproduced the circle's contents purely from a pictorial examples rather than from knowledge of the languages contained within. Comparing the Italian print version of Aub24 within the *Clavicola* text, not only was the text not understood at all by corrupted or sideways Hebrew, but the sigils are also reversed on the "Bastone" from that of every other grimoire of like manner.²⁶ Also the lettering in the *Clavicola's* fourth pentacle of Mercury is so badly reproduced from that of the Sloane and Add MSS presentation of the seventh

²⁵ See: Agrippa pp 560-561, Malachim, Celestial, and Passing of the River scripts; also: John Dee's Enochian found within the Sigil Dei Aemeth.

²⁶ Italian translation *La Clavicola del re Salomon*, printed figure "Stumenti neccessari all' arte magica".

pentacle of Mars that it appears as mere guess by the scribe.²⁷ Additionally, we see variances in angelic script produced in Agrippa's own works that leads to questions of correct reproductions within any subsequent texts. Agrippa presents sigils for planetary spirits within his 1533 printing that differ from the 1550 print.

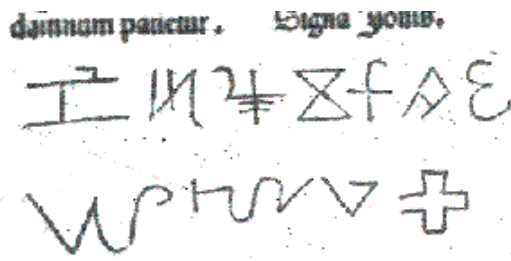


Figure 2.4: Chiromantic characters of Jupiter from Bartholomeus Cocles, *Chyromantie ac Phisionomie Anastasis* (Bononie 1504)

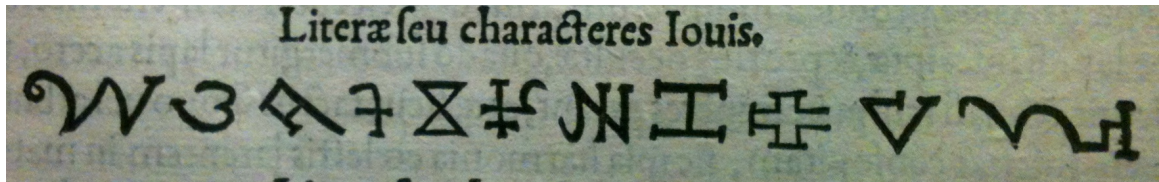


Figure 2.5: Characters of Jupiter from H.C. Agrippa's original 1533 print edition of *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*, fig. d ii.

²⁷ Italian *Clavicola* first Magic Squares: Written sideways and in badly reproduced Hebrew, French Facsimile edition with decorative Hebrew misshapen and malformed as to not produce words in Hebrew.

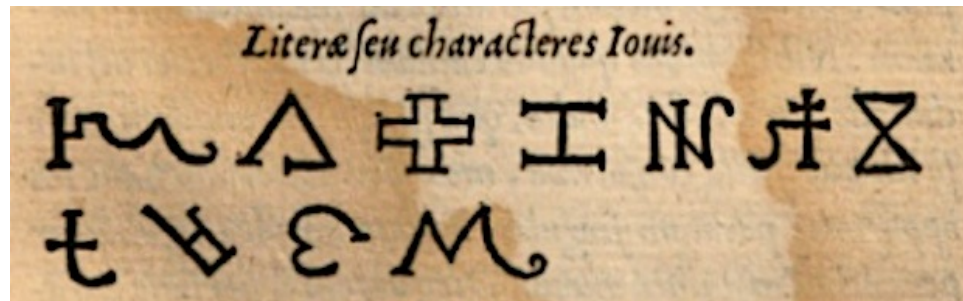


Figure 2.6: H.C. Agrippa's 1550 print edition of *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*, fig. e 3, showing a reversed and flipped image of figure of the Characters of Jupiter.

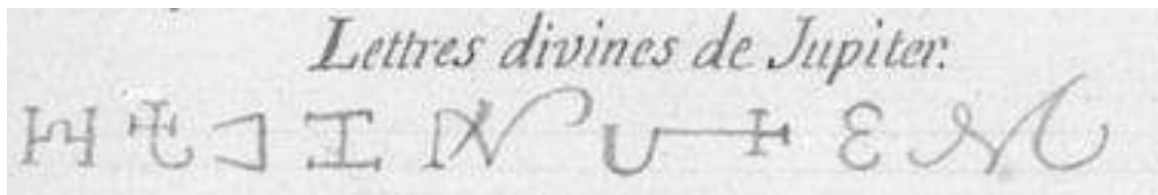


Figure 2.7: The 1634 Key of Solomon manuscript, BnF MS Francais 25314, fol. 55, showing stylized "letters" of Jupiter following H.C. Agrippa's 1550 reversed and flipped order.

All of Agrippa's characters are in reversed order from an earlier presentation by Bartholomeus Cocles in his 1504 printing of [sic] *Chyromantie ac phisionomie anastasis*,²⁸ The planetary sigil characters are thus from a "chiromantic" origin, or for use in hand divination of planetary correspondences, as Cocles title indicates. Compared to Agrippa's chiromantic signs in his first book of the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* or *De Occulta Philosophia*, we can see some discrepancies that may indicate the

²⁸ See H.C. Agrippa's 1533 and 1550 editions of *De Occulta Philosophia* p.170 well as Bartolomeus Cocles' *Chiromantie ac physiognomie anastasis* (1504) Liber V. Agrippa's book reverses his own Jupiter characters between printings of which all are identical reversals of Cocles'.

orientation of Agrippa's planetary sigils were deliberately reversed or altered and remained that way in all subsequent print editions I consulted that contain these sigils.²⁹

Reading from left to right, the first and third characters of Venus in the Cocles print are reversals from the Agrippa sigils adjacent to the Hebrew Letters Zayin and Ayin, the second and tenth from the top respectively in Fig13. The third character of the Sun in Cocles is reversed from the Agrippa sigil for Gimel, the fourteenth from the top in Fig. 13. The first character of the Moon in Cocles is reversed from the common orientation of the Moon in Agrippa's presentation of the astrologic symbol on the same page.³⁰ Finally, the third character of Saturn in Cocles is reversed from the Agrippa sigil of the Hebrew Mem, the sixth from the top in Fig 13.

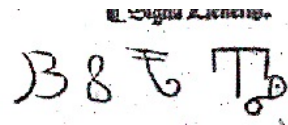


Figure 2.8: Characters of Venus from Bartholomeus Cocles, *Chyromantie ac Phisionomie Anastasis* (Bononie 1504)

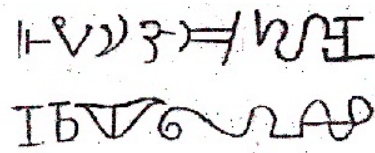


Figure 2.9: Sun Characters from Bartholomeus Cocles, *Chyromantie ac Phisionomie Anastasis* (Bononie 1504)

²⁹ Tyson, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, pp.103, 224; Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, Liber Primus, p.69.

³⁰ See Fig. 2.12

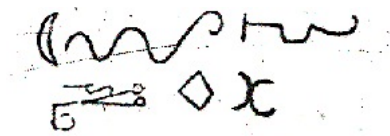


Figure 2.10: Moon Characters from Bartholomeus Cocles, *Chyromantie ac Phisionomie Anastasis* (Bononie 1504)

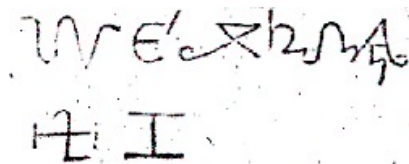


Figure 2.11: Saturn Characters from Bartholomeus Cocles, *Chyromantie ac Phisionomie Anastasis* (Bononie 1504)

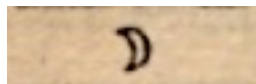


Figure 2.12: Astrologic Character of the Moon from P.170 and as presented throughout H.C. Agrippa's 1533 printed edition of *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*.

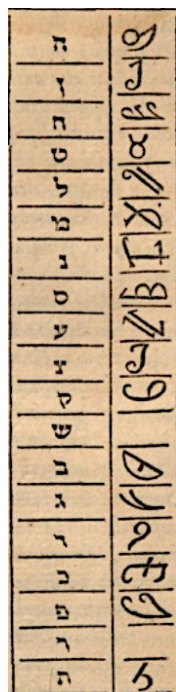


Figure 2.13: Chiromantic symbols presented in H.C. Agrippa's 1533 *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*, p. 170

The appearance of the planetary sigils in Cocles 1504 printed edition suggests that they possibly pre-date Agrippa's manuscript works. They certainly pre-date Agrippa's latter 1533 printing. Every sigil presented in Agrippa's 1533 edition was a mirror image of Cocles presentations in 1504. Despite the reversal of the Jupiter sigil in the 1550 Agrippa print we can see a clear similarity between Cocles and Agrippa works. Although it could be argued that Cocles and Agrippa may have had similar sources, rather than a lineage from Cocles to Agrippa, we see that every Solomonic manuscript or printed presentation after 1550 depicted the planetary sigils in the exact order shown by Agrippa's second edition of the *De Occulta Philosophia* with the reversal of all the Jupiter Characters. Thus, any Solomonic presentation after 1550, that includes planetary sigils, is directly linked to Agrippa solely.

III. Comparing Alphabetic Images Within Texts

Most Solomonic texts have similarities enough to deem them of the same or similar body of knowledge. This however gets complex when various nuances in the depicted images of materials are compared with texts that exist in several languages. Moreover, it then raises the question of whether or not these numerous texts did indeed have a common ancestry, or if workers within their various crafts embellished them, or both. The commonalities of the structural elements, such as the various protective and amulet-like circles are by far the most readily available for scrutiny. Rarely can one point to two texts with identical ordering of materials

and exact content within each of the pentacles described. What we can glean is some of the information within the depictions of circles that can be deciphered and compared to known materials. Here we have several differences in seemingly alike images that suggest various levels of knowledge by the scribe as well as the proposed origins of each³¹

The Italian *Clavicola*,³² as well as the Mathers/Peterson depictions of the Sloane and Aubrey MSS³³, show similarities with the Leipzig version of the *Clavicola* MS,³⁴ in that the “pentacles of Mars” are nearly identical in form and construction. All are circular and depict radial bisections with characters on the circumferential ends of numerous bisecting lines. All three share similar enough Latin versicles and descriptions to make clear determinations of the similarities of origin. Each versicle, although slightly altered in each, essentially reads: “Their swords shall pierce their own hearts and their bows shall be broken.”³⁵ The Mathers edition places angelic names in place of the Latin. It may have been the prerogative of Mathers to do so in the translation of multiple French texts. The protective and adversarial nature of the Latin versicle from Psalm 36³⁶ is the most obvious element indicating an educated western European scribe.

³¹ See Peterson’s stemma within his Key of Solomon edition.

³² See the Chapter 2 description above, of the print version of the Italian *Clavicola*, found in Aubrey MS 24.

³³ These include the numerous compiled examples of pentacles from several manuscripts mainly from the Sloane MSS in the British Library dating to the 17th century as compiled by Samuel Mathers in 1888. Peterson’s revision of Mathers’ text adds additional examples of manuscript images not previously available to Mathers. See Peterson’s Key of Solomon.

³⁴ *Clavicola di Salomone tradatti dalla lingua hebraica dal dotissimo Mathematico Melchior d’Egipto - Cod.mag. 71*, 1750.

³⁵ Leipzig reads “Gladius Eorum In Corda Ipsorum Interet Et Arcus Confringatur”; Mathers’ Key of Solomon shows the 6th pentacle of Mars and reads: “Gladius eorum interet in corda ipsorum et arcus eorum confringatur.”

³⁶ Appears as Psalm xxxvii (37) in Mathers’ in *Key of Solomon*.

The curiosities lie mainly with the symbols contained within. The Leipzig *Clavicola* MS shows only one pentacle in the same form as the other two texts noted above. The other pentacles appear as wholly unique to the Leipzig MS and outside the realm of discussion pertaining to circles and their form. However, the Leipzig's pentacle for protection is well drawn and nearly identical to the Italian *Clavicola* text that is apparently taken from the Aub24 MS.³⁷

Samuel Mathers states in his 1889 publication of the *Key of Solomon* that the letters of the Malachim script, “the tongue of the Angels is formed from the positions of stars in the heavens, by drawing imaginary lines from one star to another so as to obtain the shapes of the characters of this alphabet.”³⁸ Hence we can note a deliberate association between the alphabet and astrology or at least an implied association between what is written and the divine. The orientation follows the mother script of Hebrew, as Agrippa intended, by being read right to left. If we read the letters, as the Mathers edition notes, with the Malachim Aleph as the top or first letter of the pentacle, in counterclockwise rotation, all the texts show a general similarity to these characters, as read from left to right: ☸ ∪ N ∩ H U U V.

When rewritten and transliterated we see (Fig. 2.14-16) the characters: ELHYMQBR or Elohim Q'bir. If indeed Q'bir (or Qeber) is the correctly intended order of characters it translates to “of the grave”, or “tomb”.³⁹ Elohim are commonly associated with the higher angelic order next to God, or God itself, as well as a

³⁷ See description of Italian *Clavicola*.

³⁸ Mathers, *Key of Solomon The King*, p. 33.

³⁹ My translation.

plurality of creation deities.⁴⁰ The numerous, conflicting and translations of Elohim that exist throughout scholarship may be too immense to attempt to comment on here. We do know that in every rendition of the attempted translation of Elohim, the core understanding is that of a deity-like emanation of spiritual existence, like that of a god or higher order of plural spirits. The renaissance humanist would likely have thought of the Elohim as one of the highest angelic orders, similar to the Cherubim, Seraphim, Auralim, Malachim etc.

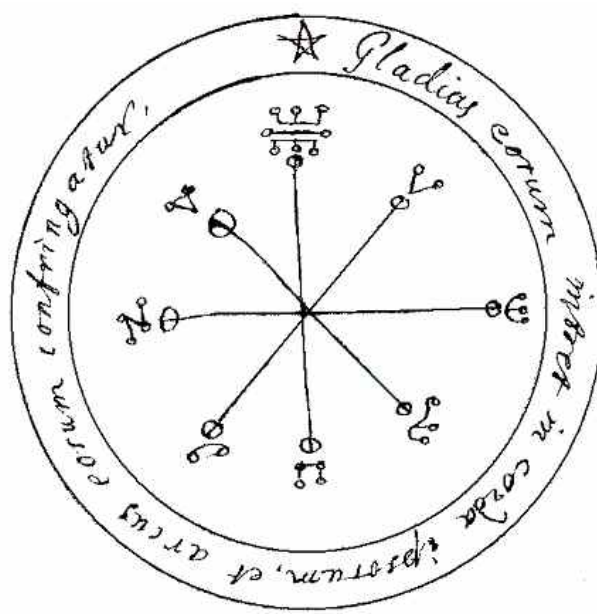


Figure 2.14 The sixth Mars Pentacle as seen in Aub24 MS fol. 58v, presented in the Mathers/Peterson edition of the Key of Solomon. Malachim characters are written in a circle at the ends of each radiating line segment.

⁴⁰ Karel Van Der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. Van Der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, Second Edition Extensively Revised*, Brill, 1999. Pp 352: "The usual word for 'god' in the Hebrew Bible is Elohim, a plural formation of eloah, the latter being an expanded form of the Common Semitic noun", 360, 372, 387, 562,



Figure 2.15: Un-described pentacle from the 1750 Leipzig MS Cod.mag.71 *Clavicula di Salamone...* Malachim characters are written in a circle at the ends of each radiating line segment.

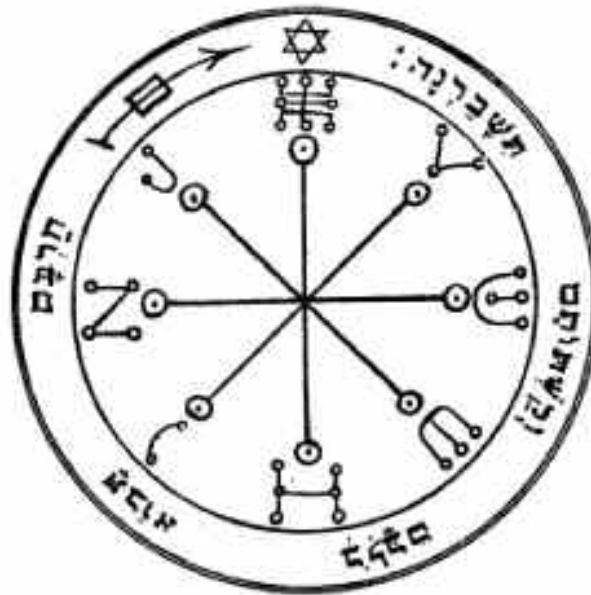


Figure 2.16: Samuel Mathers' presentation of the 6th Mars pentacle from the 1889 *Clavicula Salomonis* translation of several British Library *Key of Solomon* Manuscripts including Sloane, Add, and Aubrey MSS. Malachim characters are written in a circle at the ends of each radiating line segment.

The indication of Elohim angelic orders coexisting as necromantic spirits of the dead, or as existing as a shrouded form of Renaissance demonology, assisting and bound to the operation of the pentacle, would not be missed by anyone familiar with Hebrew translations. This may be the very impetus for use of the cipher in Malachim script. The Leipzig MS shows a pentacle with the same Malachim script only written in clockwise fashion with K or Kaph substituted for Q for Qoph in Hebrew. The Aleph in the Leipzig *Clavicola* is also on the bottom of the pentacle rather than the top. Additionally Leipzig presents Malachim script in strictly linear letterform whereby no curves are present. In this, the first letter for Yod following the letter for Aleph is written mistakenly as the character for Resh.⁴¹ This may also be an attempt at writing Elohim Gibor, a direct association with the Kabbalah in that Gevurah (Giburah) is a Kabbalist Tree of Life sephiroth on the leftmost “pillar of severity” on the Kabbalist Tree of life, governed by the archangel Michael.⁴² Francis Barrett plagiarized most of Agrippa’s *Three Books* in his 1801 *The Magus or Celestial Intelligencer*. However, Barrett did offer some insight as to his translation and definition of Elohim Gibor:

“The fifth name is Elohim Gibor, that is, the mighty God, punishing the sins of the wicked; and his numeration is called Geburah, which is to say, power, gravity, fortitude, security, judgment, punishing by slaughter and war; and it is applied to the tribunal of God, the girdle, the sword, the left hand of God: it is also called Pachad, which is fear;

⁴¹ *Clavicola di Salomone tradatti dalla lingua hebraica dal dotissimo Mathematico Melchiore dEgypto – Cod.mag.71, 1750, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Deutschland, fol. 16.*

⁴² Leonora Leet, *Secret Doctrine of the Kabbalah*, pp. 17,18, 145, 172, 187, 234, 317.

and hath his influence through the order of powers, which the Hebrews call Seraphim, and from thence through the sphere of Mars, to whom belongs fortitude, war, and affliction.”⁴³

In Fig. 2.15, between the radiating lines extending from the center point of the pentacle and terminating with Malachim characters, lies another set of characters in Hebrew Read right to left in a counterclockwise fashion: Yod Resh Aleph Lamed [Heh] Yod [Mem Final], or simply YRAL[H]I[M]. If we assume that the transcription was badly written or in the hands of a scribe unfamiliar with Hebrew, we can easily see that the intended word is Eralim or Aralim, a protective order of angels within the Kabbalistic hierarchy of angelic orders.

In 1533 Agrippa included another script he called “Celestial” as well as an alphabet called “Passing of the River” within the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.⁴⁴ It may be more likely that Agrippa was merely compiling information rather than creating it. However we have no evidence of any prior naming of a Malachim Alphabet until Agrippa produced his manuscript into print form in 1533, with the publication of his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. (See Figures 2.20 and 2.21) Trithemius, Agrippa’s teacher, already included several similar alphabets in his 1518 *Polygraphia*,⁴⁵ however no appearance of Malachim exists within any Trithemius works or within any specific translations of Hebrew based alphabets prior to Agrippa’s *Three Books*. I have found no evidence to suggest that Trithemius

⁴³ Francis Barrett, *The Magus or Celestial Intelligencer*, p.37

⁴⁴ Found in Latin as *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*.

⁴⁵ Trithemius, Johannes. *Polygraphiae Libri Sex, Ioannis Trithemii ... [Oppenheimii]: impressum aere ac impensis ... Ioannis Haselbergi de Aia*, 1518; Trithemius includes several cipher alphabets that resemble Malachim as well as resemblance to early church Slavonic, Cyrillic, Glagolitic and purely fanciful fonts. Trithemius’ alphabets follow mainly a Latin pronunciation whereas Agrippa’s alphabets shown by him are ciphers based on Hebrew letter-names.

ever created any malachim-like order of alphabet that corresponds to Hebrew as Agrippa presented in *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*.

The Fourth Sun Pentacle, from several Solomonic manuscripts,⁴⁶ shows a circular script not in Malachim but written in the similar “Passing of the River” alphabet as named by Agrippa. In this pentacle we see written counterclockwise from the top, the figures for Yod, Vau, Heh, Heh, Aleph, Daleth, Nun, and Yod. This gives us the transliterated YVHHADNY. We can split these into two common groupings of known Hebrew by the first part YVHH as a corrupted reversal of the Heh and Vau letters in YHVH, seen elsewhere in countless bible translations as Yahweh, or Jehovah or the Tetragrammatons’ presentation of the ineffable name of God. The second part is the common Hebrew God-name of ADNI or Adonai. The versicle “Lighten my eyes, lest I fall asleep forever in death, lest at any time my enemy may say I have prevailed against him.” is the translation for psalm 13:4,5 in the Latin Vulgate as well as Psalm 13:5-6 the Hebrew book of psalms.⁴⁷ A much clearer version is reproduced in the original Mathers presentation in 1888⁴⁸ whereby the Passing of the River alphabet is correctly and clearly translated as YHVH ADNI and the versicle is written completely in Hebrew, identical to the Hebrew and Latin depiction of the Psalm verses. Additionally the Hebrew Letters for the translation of the Passing of the River characters, are present in the center of the pentacle. The use of the pentacle is stated to “serveth to enable thee to see the Spirits when they appear invisible unto those who invoke them; because, when thou hast

⁴⁶ Sloane, Harley and Add MSS (as compiled by Mathers) may number this Sun pentacle differently, however the structure and script is consistent among all the manuscripts that include multiple Sun Pentacles.

⁴⁷ Illumina oculos meos ne umquam obdormiam in morte, nequando dicat inimicus meus praevali adversus eum. See Mather’s/Peterson Kos. Peterson claims it to be Psalm 12:4-5 and attempts to correct the Latin as Inlumina rather than Illumina as well as mortem rather than morte.

⁴⁸ S. "Liddell MacGregor Mathers, ed. and trans." *The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)* (1888),

uncovered it, they will immediately appear visible.”⁴⁹

There exists a 1550 printing of the alphabet “Passing of the River” within a Latin text by Joannus Antonius Pantheus. Joseph Peterson also indicates this text in his summation of Agrippa’s works within “J.F.’s” translation of the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*,⁵⁰ however he incorrectly states that the Pantheus work is a 1530 publication rather than the correct 1550 date, as it exists within the cited National Library of France collections.⁵¹

Peterson further cites a 1523 print edition of [sic] *Peculium Abrae: grammatica Hebraea una cum Latino nuper edita*, a work by Abraham ben Meir de Balmis in which a Hebrew and Latin side-by-side translation of the “Passing of the River” alphabet is present.⁵² Peterson’s incorrect Malachim dating of 1530 for one text and a 1523 for another would attempt an example of an alphabet potentially predating Agrippa’s publication in 1533.

⁴⁹ Mathers’ KoS example of the Fourth Pentacle of the Sun.

⁵⁰ “J.F.’s” English translation of Agrippa’s 1533 text presented in [sic] *THREE BOOKS OF Occult Philosophy*, WRITTEN BY Henry Cornelius Agrippa, OF NETTESHEIM, Counsellor to CHARLES the Fifth, EMPEROR of Germany: AND Iudge of the Prerogative Court. Translated out of the Latin into the English tongue, By J.F. London, Printed by R.W. for Gregory Moule, and are to be sold at the Sign of the three Bibles neer the West-end of Pauls. 1651.

⁵¹ Pantheus, Joannes Antonius, Voarchadumia contra alchimiam, ars distincta ab archimia et sophia, cum additionibus, proportionibus, numeris et figuris opportunis Joannis Augustini Panthei, veneti sacerdotis, V. Gaultherot (Parisiis), 1550; p 15; See Petersons notes on the Fourth Pentacle of the Sun in his edition of the Mathers’ *Key of Solomon*.

⁵² Abraham Ben Meir De Balmes, *Mikneh Avram = Peculium Abrae: Grammatica Hebraea Una Cum Latino Nuper Edita*. Impressa Venetijs: In Aedibus Danielis Bobergi, 1523. pp.24-25.

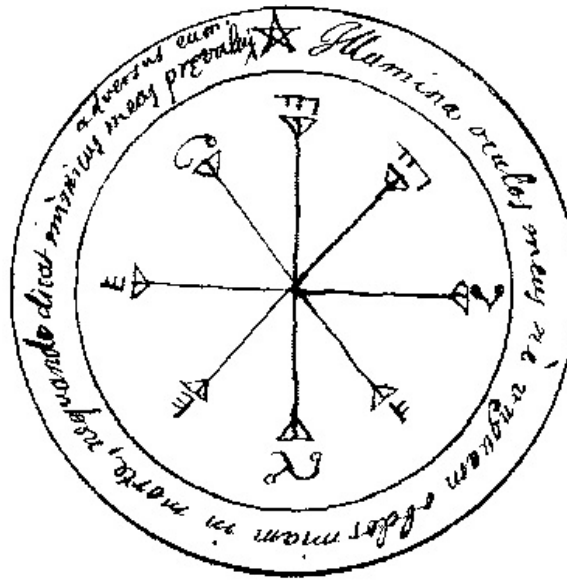


Figure 2.17: Passing of the River characters in the center of the Fourth Pentacle of the Sun from British Library Aub24 MS, Fol. 58r, as presented in the Peterson edition of the Key of Solomon.



Figure 2.18: Samuel Mathers' 1889 presentation of the 4th Pentacle of the Sun from the *Key of Solomon*, neatly drawn in both Hebrew and Passing of the River fonts.

The 1523 date of Balmis' work would not predate Agrippa's manuscript completion of his "De Occulta Philosophia" appearing in three manuscript books between 1509 and 1510,⁵³ and no additional texts cited contain any Malachim alphabet translations as presented by Agrippa. We do know of several possible prototypes to Malachim as they exist in volumes of the Sepher Razim Jewish text which extends back to the first century, suggesting it as potentially older than the Kabbalist inspired fourth century Sepher Yetzirah, and certainly older than the 13th century Sepher Zohar text. Additionally we see these same types of proto-Malachim characters in the 13th century Sepher Raziel Jewish text.⁵⁴ The Raziel also includes characters similar to the Passing of the River font or that of early Aramaic.

We do not see a translation of any of the characters that resemble Malachim in any of the source Jewish texts, nor do they wholly conform exactly to the alphabet presented by Agrippa in the *Three Books*. The number of similarities of individual characters within the first through fifth century Sepher Razim and Sepher Raziel texts is notable enough to suppose a very clear connection between characters, much in the same fashion as Malachim and Celestial scripts that Agrippa provides. This is significant in that we see a train of thought that has maintained a decidedly Jewish and Hebraic association since the early part of the first millennium. As I have shown, Malachim was henceforth organized, defined, and presented wholly and uniquely by Agrippa in the early

⁵³ Agrippa at age 23 completed and circulated the manuscript versions of what became the *Tres Libri de Occulta Philosophia* but did not publish as print form until 1533 two years before his death. His introduction includes letters to various figures describing the dissemination of his early works to Trithemius as well as Hermannus, the Earl of Wyda. See: Tyson *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, li-lvii.

⁵⁴ Originating in British Library Sloane MSS 3826, 3846, 3847 and MS Add 15299, a latter printing in Amsterdam in 1701 is now the subsequent and current format for most all renditions.

16th century.



Figure 2.19: The Malachim alphabet as presented in the 1550 reprint of Agrippa's 1533 original Latin publication of "De Occulta Philosophia"

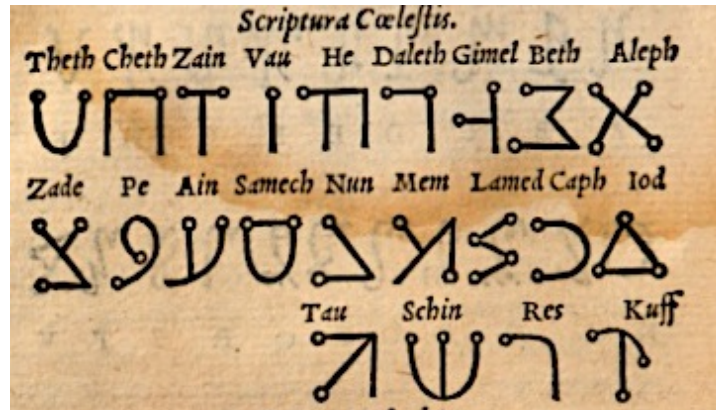


Figure 2.20: Agrippa's Celestial alphabet as presented in the 1550 edition of the original 1533 print version of Agrippa's "De Occulta Philosophia" manuscript.

When compared to Agrippa's alphabet presentations of "Malachim", "Celestial" and "Passing of the River", most characters within the Solomonic

pentacles appear similar enough to compare and read legibly. This effectively places a date on the origin of each to no earlier than the early 16th century. If we are to agree with data denoting Agrippa as the original publisher of Malachim script, as no earlier source is apparent, any text that contains Malachim questions any definitive claim of the Solomonic manuscript's origination of antiquity. Although it can be argued that the contents may carry a Hebraic origin through subject matter pertaining to Solomon or even claiming to be written by King Solomon, Agrippa's alphabetic evidence supports an early modern origination for the body of Solomonic manuscripts and texts. It may be plausible to consider that alterations to the text were placed within the hands of 16th-century scribes and the source literature may be older, however the existence of Malachim in Solomonic manuscripts suggests a direct Agrippa connection. Despite Trithemius' works⁵⁵ on several encoded scripts, the only definitive figure associated with Malachim's origin is Agrippa through his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Johannes Trithemius, *Polygraphiae*, 1518, containing several cipher alphabets.

⁵⁶ See citation 42 above.

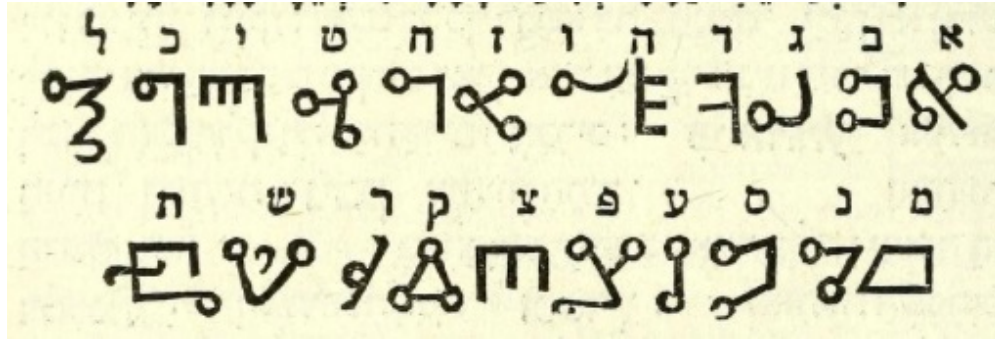


Figure 2.21: Passing of the River Alphabet with the corresponding Hebrew letter translations. From the 1523 *Mikneh Avram*. Image provided through: Balmes, Abraham ben Meir de, ca. 1440-1523, *Peculium Abrae : grammatica Hebraea una / cum Latino nuper edita per doctiss. virum magistrum Abraham de Balmis artium & medicinae doctorem. Impressa Venetijs : In aedibus Danielis Bo[m]bergi, XIII K[a]l[endas] Dece[m]bris [18 Nov.] 1523. [315] leaves ; 22 cm. PJ4563 .B27 Main Library-SpecialCollections.*

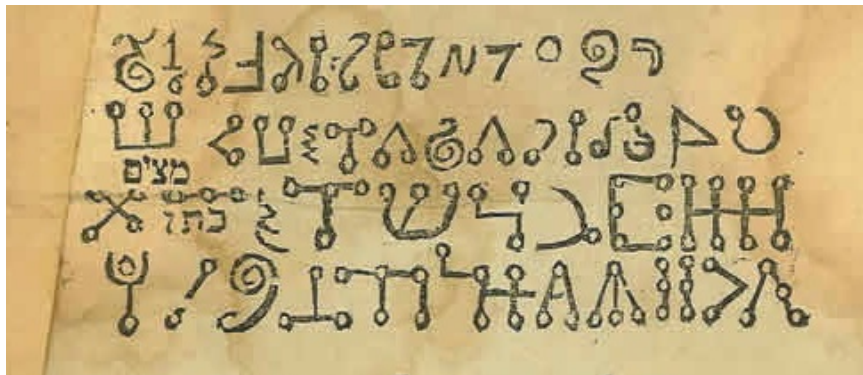


Figure 2.22: Mystical characters from the 1701 First edition Amsterdam printing of the 13th century Sepher Raziel manuscripts housed in the British Museum as British Library Sloane MSS 3826, 3846, 3847 and MS Add 15299. Image sourced from Chabad-Lubavitch Library and provided by Hebrewbooks.org



Figure 2.23: The Passing of the River Alphabet within the 1550 reprint of Agrippa's 1533 "Three Books of Occult Philosophy". Each letter is presented in the Latinized phonetic for the corresponding Hebrew letter-name.

IV Genealogical Deviations and Alterations

Several comparisons of each MS collection exist in such prolific numbers that I will not attempt to recreate such monumental work here. However, by the analysis of magical alphabets, we can attempt to more accurately source some of the intellectual origins of the various manuscripts and further posit the origination of the bulk of information within the grimoires of the early modern period. Rather than the near impossible task of placing a static timeline-origin to the very beginnings of the grimoires we can date the currents of thoughts to various early modern figures by how they employed use of their writing systems and ciphers. To attempt an entire chronology one would have to have every piece of data pertaining to proven esoteric and intellectual exchange and know where and when each transfer happened. This cannot be possible with the texts available nor is it logical to

think that such a history can ever be produced. When considering the exchange of information throughout Europe, to understand Germanic-lands as a 16th century hub for the Key of Solomon is important evidence in the historiography of the genre in that many of the existent manuscripts were written in the academically accepted Latin rather than German. This is important in that the expected readership, if the manuscripts were intended for readers at all, was not that of the colloquially inspired commoner but that of the educated class, familiar with multiple languages.

It remains difficult to jump to the assumption that Agrippa was the only prototypical author of the Solomonic cycle. We can posit that if the scribes for the various texts knew of Malachim, Passing of the River, and Angelic (celestial) alphabets, and combined them in Solomonic magical talismans, they would have likely read Agrippa and thus been aware of his collected materials. Despite linguistic varieties of the Solomonic cycle, it is with Agrippa, in Germany, that we can begin to locate the intellectual origination of Solomonic texts.

By the mid 17th century, insertion of the names for Olympic Spirits of Greek antiquity⁵⁷, geomantic symbols for each planet, and the corresponding sigils and magic squares were widespread throughout most all of the Solomonic manuscripts. Nearly all the grimoire structural contents of symbols by 1700 can be found within Agrippa's corpus.⁵⁸ The puzzling elements outside of this Agrippa origin remain the scripts that are unique to each text. Although the placement of a magical script for

⁵⁷ Possibly from Agrippa's three books as well.

⁵⁸ Geomantic symbols for planets, angelic names, prescribed suffumigations, herb use, Olympic sigils and planetary hours are undeniably similar to the method of presentation found in Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. See Fig. 13 concerning Agrippa's contextual symbol proliferation through his works.

each planet or angel may be consistent, the actual written image of the series of symbols does indeed tend to shift from copy to copy. Additionally we see shape examples of squared areas of magical operations within the construction of the *Ars Almadel* book, appearing as a more obvious contrast to the main-body of the text's magic circle within the *Lesser Key of Solomon*.⁵⁹ So extreme is the Hebrew *Sepher Mapheah Sholomo* that none of the extensive angelic or sigil writing is immediately connected to any other Solomonic text, without serious and painstaking analysis of several possible sources outside the Solomonic Cycle, despite it being an apparent copy of a previous manuscript. The frequent use of the Greek word TETRAGRAMMATON throughout the text indicates that it is not a purely Hebrew creation but another translation. Purely Jewish textual representation of the ineffable name of God would either be an assortment of Hebrew words for Deity or simply the YHVH as the Greek word translates. The *Sholomo* text also contains some of the characters of the Malachim script of Agrippa.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Peterson edition of the *Lesser Key of Solomon* or *Lemmegeton* where the book “Ars Almadel” images are included in Latinized Hebrew and Greek as a comprising element of the *Lesser Key of Solomon*. See also Gollancz’s manuscript facsimile of *Sepher Mapheah Sholomo* where the Almadel is shown completely in Hebrew.

⁶⁰ Hermann Gollancz, *Sepher Mapheah Sholomo*, pp. 49-50.

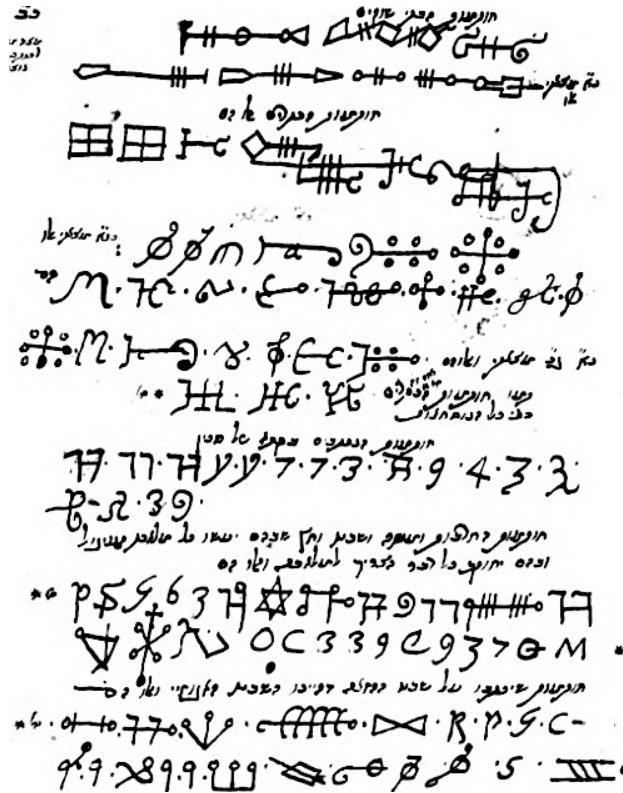


Figure 2.24: Sigils from the *Sepher Maphteah Shelomo* (Book of the Key of Solomon), An exact facsimile of an original book of magic in Hebrew, With illustrations now produced by Hermann Gollancz. Fol. 22

Several Solomonic copies present a consistency of the formation of astrological and empowered writing that remains structurally similar enough to show a continuum of thought. *Sepher Mapheah Sholomo* begins with the directions to construct the Almadel seen in the “Lesser Key of Solomon” texts translated by both Mathers and Peterson.⁶¹ The reader is essentially directed to create a square wax tablet supported by candles above a pot of incense. The surface of the tablet

⁶¹ British Library Sloane MSS. 2731, 3825, and Harley MS 6483, all show similar versions of the Lemmegeton and the wax Almadel for divination. See the Joseph Peterson edition, *Lemmegeton* (The Lesser Key of Solomon).

contains particular inscriptions of both Hebrew and Greek by combining the Hebrew word for God “Adonai” and the Greek word for the four letter name of god “Tetragrammaton” in the outside edges of the square’s top surface. Uniform to all renditions remains the six-pointed star in the center along with five pointed stars in the corners, just before the holes drilled for smoke to travel through. This alone appears a fusion of Egyptian and Greek classical tradition of five pointed stars with the six-pointed star of a wholly Davidic and Hebraic origin.⁶²

The Almadel’s presence in the Solomonic cycle presents a curious variation of ritual space for the practitioner, and calls into question the work areas for the experiments. Within the Almadel section of Solomonic texts, the tablet’s construction dictates a wax square approximately six by six inches on each side and a nonspecific thickness. The Almadel’s thickness needs to be able to support a stone and gold triangle in its center while being suspended by the outermost edges, at the corners only.⁶³ This metallic triangle with inscriptions⁶⁴ is placed under the stone or ball for scrying. The triangle in the available MSS reads: Hell, Hellion, Adonaij, which may be a corruption of the Hebrew words for God, El, Elon, Adonai, or a likely indication of Greek and Byzantine influence by way of the Sun-God name Helios.

The purpose of the triangle is then to scry or divine by assistance of spirits specifically called in certain seasons in favorable moon phases.⁶⁵ The Almadel

⁶² J.E. Cirlot indicates the particularity of the orientation of the stars in that ascendant five point stars are akin to the Mithraic traditions and of Greco/Roman origin as well as ancient Egyptian. The descendant five point star is ‘used in black magic’. Cirlot acknowledges the multitude of interpretations of stars and cedes to the common understanding that an ascendant star is found in hieroglyphs that spell the words ‘the teacher’, ‘to educate’, ‘to bring up (as in direction)’. See Cirlot pp. 309-10.

⁶³ A crystal ball or mirrored surface is recommended for the scrying.

⁶⁴ See Lemmegeton citation above.

⁶⁵ See the Joseph H. Peterson edition of the *Lesser Key of Solomon, Almadel*, whereby each season or

appears in The Gollancz *Sholomo* and *Lesser Key of Solomon* manuscripts previously discussed, as a Latinized transliterated form of Hebrew, whereby all the words directed for etching on the surface, appear in Latin characters but spell Hebrew names. The *Sepher Maphteah Sholomo* even as a latter re-translation, shows the names in Hebrew although they are notably different from the Latinized versions of the Sloane MSS. This indication alone suggests that either portions of the Gollancz translations of the *Maphteah Sholomo* from an earlier or separate text or that they were pure inventions of the translator, Rabbi Hermann Gollancz. The presence of Kabbalistic Hebrew names amidst various cipher scripts suggests that there is unmistakable knowledge of mystical Hebraic traditions and that Gollancz, at very least, had exposure to other works of the Solomonic Cycle and their modes of presenting such information.

I have transcribed into English letters the Hebrew on the outermost edges of the Gollancz MSS, read from the top of the square, in a counterclockwise manner right-to-left, presents as read left-to-right: (Top) ADONAI ELOHIM RACHMAN, (Left) ELYION ELOI ELI, (Bottom) YOD BETH AGLA, (Right) TETTRAGRAMMATON SHADAI IAH.⁶⁶ The inscribed representation of diety-names are thus perpetuated.

The *Almadel* texts describe the Almadel as an altar-like magical surface whereby the square wax tablet is inscribed and placed upon the feet of standing candlesticks, suspended over a small pot of incense, while supporting a stone in which to scry and divine. Here the practitioner is not directed to physically stand upon the surface but to gaze upon it or manipulate it by hand. This smaller rendition

⁶⁶ “cora” is accompanied by a specific series of angelic spirits to call by lengthy evocations and prayers.
⁶⁶ See Fig 2.25.

of a working area physically removes the magus from the experimentation and favors the intellectual engagement over the physical investiture required within magic circles of older Solomonic texts.

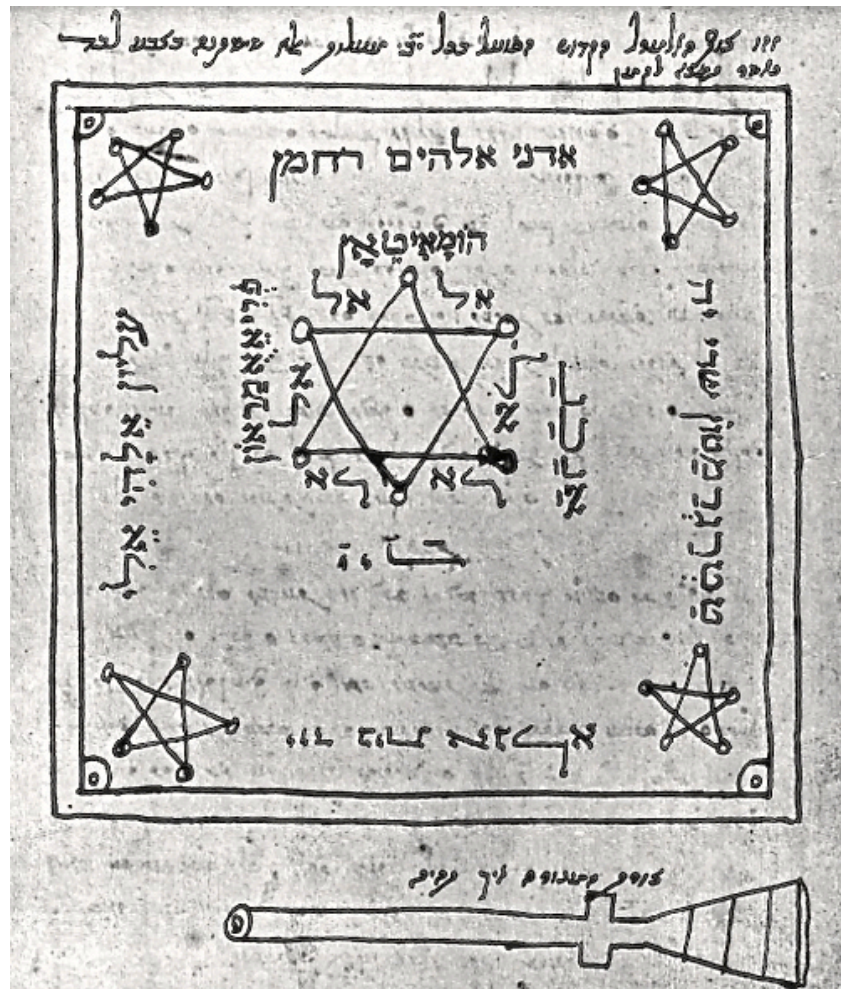


Figure 2.25: The Almadel From Gollancz's 1903 facsimile of the *Sepher Maphteah Sholomo MSS* indicating holy names and characters to be inscribed in the wax surface, and the construction of the supporting candles.

John Dee produced an enormous volume of work dedicated to the discovery by revelation that which became an entirely new language, or as Dee saw it: a return

to the original tongue of man. With some 104 folios housed now in the British Library the “*Mysteriorum Libri Quinque*” or “Five Books of Mystery,” include a foundation for a completely original school of thought for magicians. Dee employed the works of Agrippa and the Solomonic methods seen manifested by use of his wax tablets, and incantations listing names of angelic orders associated with what is known to Kabbalists as the Shemhamphorash; the divine 72 letter name of God⁶⁷.

Dee’s “Five books of Mystery” employed a new version of an Almadel whereby the surface of a table was utilized in similar fashion, creating what they called “The Holy Table.” Dee’s Table employed the use of Hexagram, linear script in Dee’s created Enochian Language on the edges of the square table’s surface, and various talismanic devices upon the surface. Of note is Dee’s use of five round wax tablets that were each in the shape and form of the Sigil Dei Aemeth⁶⁸ and witnessed within several Solomonic Grimoires in varying shape and form.⁶⁹ The sigil appears in several of the earliest solomonic texts dating to the 14th century, however several examples of the text depict information acquired by Agrippa, making them no earlier than 16th century copies.⁷⁰ Dee’s Sigil Dei Aemeth was ordered by the

67. Or. MS. 14759, f- 37^v: The Solomonic texts and Agrippa describe the 72 letter name of god as a derivative of the biblical Exodus 14:19-21 whereby groups of three letters are taken from each passage and combined to form angelic names. The reverse order prescribes demonic names.

68 John Dee’s *Mysteriorum Libri Quinque* contains explicit instructions to create the wax tablets and furniture. As of 2014 three remaining wax tablets, allegedly made by Dee, are on display at the British Museum.

69 The 15th century Francais 14783 French translation of the Key of Solomon presents a similar Sigil Dei Aemeth image to what Dee and Kelly had revealed by the archangel Raphael. The French translation was not available to Mathers or Crowley and Peterson leaves it out of any discussion of Solomonic lineages. It may be newly revealed within the online collections at the National Library of France and obscured until now. The MS presents a sigil alike to the 14th century British Library Sloane MS 313 which was owned by John Dee as *Liber Juratus* or *Sworn Book of Honorius*.

70 Joseph Peterson cites British Library Royal MS 17 AxlII, Sloane MSS 3826, 3853, 3883 and 3885 as being 16th century and latter. Where Sloane 3854 is 14th century the majority show clear assimilation of Agrippa’s *Three Books*. See: Peterson’s translation of *Liber Juratus*, Esotericarchives.com, March 2012.

angels to be created in wax, nine inches in diameter and one and a half inches thick. Upon which an entire library's worth of knowledge was to be imparted by use of numeric and geometric design indicating several levels of Kabbalah, astrology, Talmudic and Yetzirac names as well as the Shemhamphorash denoted in Dee's newly revealed Enochian language.⁷¹ Dee was aware of a sigil by this name from Agrippa writings but up to this point no extensive copies existed. Dee's was the first to include the vast amounts of angelic correspondences.

The Sigil itself, borrowed from Solomonic tradition, contains a Greek, or possibly ancient Hebrew, Tau in the center of a Five pointed star. J.E. Cirlot lists the five pointed star as being an ascendant teacher or emanation of divine spirit; "rising upwards toward the point of origin".⁷² This is important to distinguish from the six pointed star, or star of David. The six pointed star, from a Hermetic perspective denotes a unity of that which is above to that which is below; the divinely represented male and female unity or "marriage, because it is formed of the union of two triangles, one masculine and the other feminine"⁷³ Rather than this universally Hermetic design implying unity, the sigil's design was for more protective purposes.

Dee was further instructed to include several seven sided/pointed shapes surrounding his central pentagram. Seven is of interest to many religious and philosophical understandings in that there are seven planets, seven days a week, seven deadly sins/virtues etc. Agrippa of whom Dee respectfully borrows a great

⁷¹ John Dee, *Five Books of Mystery*, pp. 269-70.

⁷² J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, Second Edition, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1971, p.310

⁷³ Manly Hall, p. 219.

deal of knowledge, exhaustively lists tables, at length, concerning all aspects of the scale of the number seven.⁷⁴

As a mathematician, Dee could have clearly observed the relationship of odd numbers employed within the Sigil as seven on the outside showing the planetary relationships, five in the midst denoting the four elements plus spirit of man, and finally the three of the triangle or Trinity of God. Dee is noted to have fashioned a triangle or delta lamen for just this purpose to be worn throughout his operations.⁷⁵

Dee's reconstruction and reforming of the Sigil Dei Aemeth stands as a compendium of his entire Enochian magical system⁷⁶ and remains a latter legacy of the Solomonic pentacles and angelic theurgia works found within the books of the Almadel.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Agrippa, p. 274: Agrippa even mentions the infernal aspects including Hell, death, destruction, etc. Which may speak to Dee's influence to ward evil and bind spirits to his will during the course of his operations.

⁷⁵ Dee, Ed. Joseph Peterson, 2003.

⁷⁶ The entirety of Enochian Magic is far too extensive to delve into within this study alone. For more on Dee's magic I refer the reader to: Jennifer Rampling, *John Dee and the Alchemists: Practicing and Promoting English Alchemy in the Holy Roman Empire*, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 43 (2012), 498–508; Jennifer Rampling, *The Elizabethan Mathematics of Everything: John Dee's "Mathematicall Praeface" to Euclid's Elements*, *BSHM Bulletin: Journal of the British Society for the History of Mathematics*, 26 (2011), 135–146; Stephen Clucas, ed. *John Dee: interdisciplinary studies in Renaissance thought*. Dordrecht: Springer (2006); Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*. London: Routledge (2001).

⁷⁷ See Mathers' 1904 "Ars Almadel" and "Theurgia Goetia" of the *Lesser Key of Solomon*



Figure 2.26: A foldout depiction of John Dee's Holy Table found in Dee's 1659 printing of *A True and Faithful Relation...* Within this text Dee describes Angelic directions for creation of a working table surface that contains these exact inscriptions.

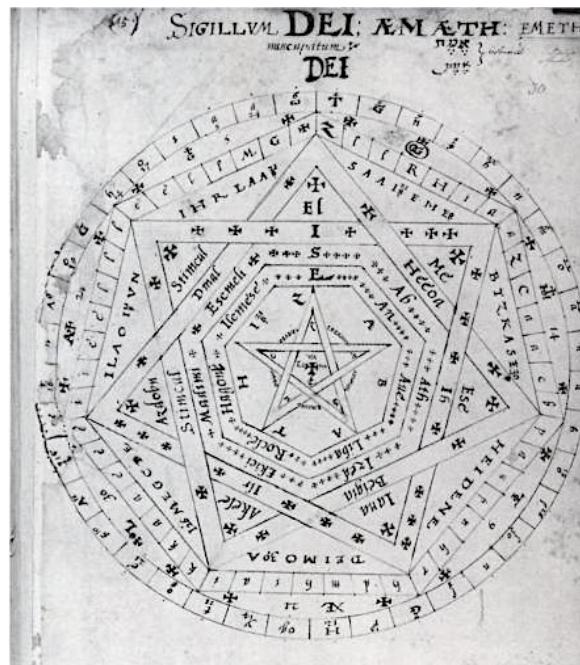


Figure 2.27: From 16th Century British Library Sloane MS 3188 showing Dee's Sigil Dei Ameth as prescribed for inscription upon a round wax tablet. This 'sigil of truth' is described to sit upon the "Holy Table" while four other smaller ones fit under each leg of the table.

V. Chapter Two Conclusion

The contents of grimoires between 1400 and 1800 were clearly similar in composition, conjurations, and depictions of material cultures. The likelihood of a unified intellectual origination is not only possible, it is probable. Malachim utilization along with Passing of the River and Celestial alphabets points to earlier versions of ciphered alphabets but no singular book or manuscript contain all three in the manner of Agrippa's *Three Books* (1533). I have now shown that no clearly transcribed or presented Malachim alphabet exists before Agrippa and would therefore indicate an Agrippa origin for any grimoire materials containing such. What we then see is a tradition of Grimoire use solidifying in Renaissance Europe and descending within the various works of the Solomonic Cycle.

Shape and form of various working areas of the practitioner or magus suggest a possible variance of understood use of geometric space. That we see the magic circle, as alone and existing as a barrier toward outward corruptive influences of spirits, is a potentially significant contrast to the squared circle adopted by latter magicians for their work. This may be a shift away from the humanist investiture of the self, in need of protection from corruption, and toward that of an intellectual distancing from the experiments described within the grimoire.

Despite variations of symbolic scriptural designs, and corrupted Hebrew or cipher scripts, the literary structure and basic imagery components remained fairly consistent throughout 400 years of linguistic and geographical exchange. While the contents of the texts may shift between Catholic litanies, Orthodox rituals or Hebrew mysticism, the material items described for the working of the grimoire

experiments were generationally passed as the obvious elements of greatest importance. The symbolic natures of each inscription depicted within the grimoires carries a collected knowledge transcending regional trends and at times relies on implied understanding of deified interventions within each created object. Early modern practitioners would seek to utilize these motifs within their associations in court, profession, or for personal spiritual and monetary gain. Grimoires then mandated a degree of secrecy and esoteric presence as the texts were understood to contain powers not understandable or suitable for the masses. Grimoires were then powerful books whose contents were beyond the vulgar, uneducated, and uninitiated classes of Europe. To know their contents was to essentially wield power sought by the highest of European empires and was at times the impetus for massive social, political and religious changes. Dee's impact alone on Elizabethan England as well as with internal power struggles for the English crown is well known to scholarship and I will only touch on it in the next chapter. Of most importance were the various participants in aspects of divinations, and perceived conjurations. Monarchial and religious fluctuations between embrace or rejection of such philosophical and scientific acts show how these cultures manifested as motifs for social structuring.⁷⁸ That such texts and associated knowledge was seen as a justified and utilized power is noteworthy. The motivation for authorship secrecy, utilizing ciphered scripts and symbols, through a limited continuation of anonymous

⁷⁸ Dee was embraced during the reign of England's Elizabeth I and within the privy counsel in that his astrological forecasting aided in coronation dates, predicted death of Elizabeth's sister Mary, the formation of the fleet to combat the Spanish Armada. In the subsequent reign of James I, Dee fell from grace as a "conjurer" whereby the astrologer Robert Fludd gained favor with his ability to create steel through alchemical use of coal in the smelting. See note 73 on Dee. See also: William H. Huffman, *Robert Fludd and the End of the Renaissance* (Routledge London & New York, 1988)

manuscript productions, was favored and more prolific than that of a traceable and more accessible printed copy.

Chapter Three

High Renaissance Hermetic Imagery

The use of image in the magical and Hermetic arts would serve to expedite philosophical underpinnings of particular transfers of thought by way of removing language as a barrier to the exchanges. By way of warfare, trade, or migration across Europe and the Mediterranean, each language group could cloud the efficacy of shared thought among the authors of grimoires. However, if such philosophy was placed within a visually universal medium, the images of scribes, painters and artists would then position themselves to become the keepers of entire libraries of knowledge.

Between the 14th and 16th centuries, huge advances in scientific and philosophical perspective can be seen within the artworks of several painters. Although my perspective is not to re-define or chronicle the whole of renaissance art history through the various painters in Italy, I find it useful to look upon early examples of enigmatic art at the onset of the Renaissance in order to see the depth of knowledge transfers among those not in clerical or stately positions. This would indicate a relative level of esoteric knowledge proliferation among the commoner, even if a wealthy patron commissioned the art. Likewise it would indicate important modes of communicating imagery and use of images found within grimoires at the onset of the Renaissance rather than a latter time in which such knowledge was more prolific. For as much as the patron may dictate the form of the painting, the artist must have some degree of understanding in order to communicate various perspectives upon the canvas or within the pages of print or folios of vellum. As

much as simple line drawing and letter iconography can inspire several degrees of understanding among the images in the Solomonic texts previously discussed in Chapter Two, skilled painters deploy numerous techniques that elucidate the same concepts and social importance of images and materials contained within the Solomonic cycle, as well as early revival of Egyptian and Hermetic arts as a whole.

The enigmatic painting *La Tempesta* by Giorgio Barbarelli da Castelfranco, or simply Giorgione, has prompted voluminous critique and inspired uncountable interpretations as to its meaning, far too numerous to list here. Despite such massive scholarship, the painting remains enigmatic as to its purpose or intent of the painter or patron who commissioned it. As a renaissance era painting, we can suggest likely motivations of given persons contemporary with the painter himself. However, the argument as to whether the painting is of a particular subject or if it is a series of individual symbols remains.¹ *La Tempesta* remains so far outside the comparable examples of art of its time² that speculation as to its intent may be all we are left with. As contemporary to Agrippa's and Trithemius' written works, the art of Giorgione might reflect some dissemination of humanist and Hermetic thought among Italians. What we can possibly glean are the layers of symbolic representation present and known at the time Giorgione was painting *La Tempesta*. Rather than entering into the debate with yet another voice for or against standing interpretations, this paper will discuss the standing interpretations and add an

¹ Bernard Aikema. "Giorgione: Relationships with the North and a New Interpretation of La Vecchia and La Tempesta." *Giorgione: myth and enigma* (2004): 85-103; Kaplan, Paul H.D. (1986), THE STORM OF WAR: THE PADUAN KEY TO GIORGIONE'S *TEMPESTA*. *Art History*, 9: 405-427.

² Leonardo DaVinci would most likely be a comparable figure but far more prolific and explained as to intent and structure of subject painting. Giorgione here, remains without clear understanding about whether his are subject or landscape paintings by scholarship.

original contribution what may not be already discussed in terms of interpretation. In doing so I seek to further the discussion about how the painting and painter has served to occult ideas existent by the time of the painting . It follows that to understand the painting and the information it presents, it is necessary to direct the viewer's attention to particular iconography, myth and visual representations that I will describe on the canvas as well as those covered up in the process of painting. In this light we can see the painting's evolution. I will posit that through the understood lens of the educated, and possibly initiated renaissance patron, several methods of symbolic use in paintings, beyond any particular linguistic vernacular, will tell us more about interpretive design and early use of symbol as seen within grimoires described in Chapter 2.

La Tempesta or "The Tempest", as much as it stands to be an apparent subject-less landscape painting, containing seemingly enigmatic positions, postures, and organization of images, can serve as an esoteric roadmap containing iconographic and allegorical imagery from Christian Humanism back to early antiquity. The painting serves to present multiple layers of theological interpretation, depending on the education of the viewer, as well as to exist as an origin point for subsequent esoteric art and intellectual influence.

I. Commission Dispute

Although we know that *La Tempesta* was painted between 1506-1508³, the painting's original patron remains controversial. Gabriele Vendramin has been

³ No conclusive evidence is present to suggest a definitive date other than commentary by contemporaries

accepted as the most probable patron of *The Tempest* as he is known to have employed and commissioned several other painters known to Giorgione including Bellini, Vasari, Titian and Leonardo Da Vinci.⁴ As one who had been prolific in gathering these artists and Venetian thinkers, Vendramin is the likely patron. The assumption is not immune to justified skepticism however. As prolific a figure as Vendramin was, there lived a noble possibility. Isabella D'Este (1474 –1539) of Ferrara was noted to have had extensive humanist educational upbringing including that in Platonic thought and the extensive works of Virgil.⁵ Following the death of her husband, Francesco II Gonzaga, regent of Mantua, and ascending to regent of Mantua herself, Isabella traveled extensively as a diplomat and collector. She commissioned several paintings and was a noted art collector. It is known that she commissioned Da Vinci to do a portrait of her and had employed Titian to make alterations to a portrait he painted, citing that he made her look too old⁶. In 1510 she wrote a letter to Giorgione to commission or attain a painting⁷. It is under debate currently whether she already knew of Giorgione's death to suspected plague. It is possible that she did know and was the impetus behind her interest in the painting she requested. The argument then begins and ends with whether the painting she

that has dated it as such. Art historians, Salvatore Settis, and Edgar Wind both concur on the dating.

⁴ Jaynie Anderson. "A Further Inventory of Gabriel Vendramin's Collection." *The Burlington Magazine* 121, no. 919 (1979): 639-648.

⁵ San Juan, Rose Marie. "The Court Lady's Dilemma: Isabella d'Este and Art Collecting in the Renaissance."

Oxford Art Journal 14, no. 1 (1991): 67-78., Ady, Julia Mary Cartwright. *Isabella d'Este, marchioness of*

Mantua, 1474-1539: a study of the renaissance. Vol. 2. EP Dutton and company, 1903.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ludwig Baldass. *Giorgione*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1961) p.117

requested from him was *La Tempesta* or another.⁸ If it can be shown eventually that it was indeed *La Tempesta* then we can say with more assurance that either she didn't commission Giorgione, as it was in the possession of another or it was flatly refused to her. Vendramin's prolific involvement and family history extending trade through the Levant is documented well enough to position him as the likely candidate to commission the work but definitive assurances are not possible.⁹ This is further complicated when we read of Vendramin's description of the painting as merely a "soldier and a gypsy".¹⁰

II. *La Tempesta's* Imagery

The Tempest presents several images that I will highlight as they are. I will reserve the posited interpretations for later as it is important for the viewer to know what is actually in the painting that may not be obvious to an untrained eye. The components within the 83 by 73 centimeter, oil on canvas painting, in no particular order of importance, are presented as:¹¹

The Man with a Staff - The lower left of the painting has a man with red and white tunic, as staff in his right hand, his left concealed. He is looking to the viewer's right and possibly at the woman and child. He appears to either have different colored leggings or to have one torn off and exposing his leg bare. He is a dark man

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The painting hung in Vendramin's estate but I have not seen any evidence as to the proof that Vendramin commissioned it.

¹⁰ Stefaniak, pp. 121-155.
Settis, pp 78-79

¹¹ See Fig 1

and on the opposite side of the painting as the woman and child. This man is representative of several of the classical male archetypes, which will be discussed more.

The Nude Woman with the Child - In the lower right sits a mostly nude woman nursing a child who is oddly not in her lap. The child is an infant sitting on the outside of her right leg. Her legs are arranged in right angles awkwardly, with her left knee down and her right knee elevated. A small shrub lightly conceals her body. She has a white cloth on draped on her shoulders and under her. She sits on a slight knoll across the water from the man. She is looking directly at the viewer.

The Broken Columns - Central in the painting, set back from the two figures are two columns, or one column that has broken and fallen over against its base. There is a rectangular stone base depicted under the column and a smaller square portion of the base lower and to the right of the larger column base.

The Lightning Bolt and Clouds – At the top of the painting is cloud-obscured light from a supposed sun and a lightning bolt extending from the sky in the distance, pointing toward the grounds and the columns, and ultimately toward the man.

The River (water) – Extending from the top of the painting and curving inward as to suggest an eddy or offshoot of the larger river, the river comes toward the viewer from under a bridge and is obscured toward the viewer's right. It bends left at the columns and comes between the man and woman.

The City – on the opposite side of the river from the man and extending upwards and to the left of the viewer are buildings of various shapes and sizes. The

top of the painting and furthest from the sight of the viewer appears to be either a domed mosque or domed cathedral, in line with the columns that are below it in the painting.

The Bird – Atop a building with a slanted roof near the top of the painting and just to the right, stands a large bird. Similar in depiction to a stork, pelican, or ibis the bird appears white, is above and behind the woman and just to the right and in the middle ground between the woman and the lightning.

The Graffiti – Only visible upon extreme close examination of the painting's detail, upon two buildings, in the depicted distance, one in the top-center and one in the top right, there are faint depictions of red images upon the exterior walls of tall buildings. The graffiti image in the center appears to be an animal while the one off to the right appears as possibly a collection of circles. Both are unclear in mostly smaller photographs representing the painting.¹²

The Shrubs – At the woman's feet, in the foreground are two shrubs fully depicted. One is in full foliage and slightly obscuring the woman's body. The other is without foliage and appears dead. Both are just at the bank of the water's inlet between the man and woman.

The Over-painted woman bather – Previously painted and now observable only by x-ray photography, is a seated nude woman with her feet in the water between the man and woman. She was eventually painted over by the artist and replaced with the man with the staff as we now see it.¹³

¹² Salvatore Settis presents arguments for the origination and possible meaning of such graffiti that I will expand upon latter in the chapter.

¹³ Salvatore Settis, *Giorgione's Tempest: Interpreting the Hidden Subject*, University of Chicago Press,

The Serpent – A small serpent is seen crawling into a crevice just below where the shrubs are located.

III. Interpretations

As problematic and varied as some of the individual interpretations of each of these subjects can present, it may be more effective to view them not as subjects to be interpreted alone but as parts of a greater interpretation. Giorgione may have intended an interpretation based on the collective relationships of images in the painting as is certainly suggested by his presentation in another work “The Three Philosophers” from 1509.¹⁴

Salvatore Settis, as translated by Ellen Bianchini, commented that the 1509 “Three Philosophers” Giorgione painted, although commonly misinterpreted as the three magi at the birth of Christ, can be read as representing the three stages of life, youth, manhood, and old age. Settis suggests that the painting also alludes to the phases of intellectual thought from classical Greek antiquity to middle ages rule of Islam, and finally to the common era of the Christian-Humanist Renaissance. Settis further proposed that the three were the triple Hermes (Trismegistus), represented as Moses, Zoroaster and Pythagoras, and equally emblematical of the three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Islam and Christianity.¹⁵ We can see through the *Three Philosophers* painting that Giorgione had knowledge of terrestrial and physical measurement as seen by the youngest of the three men in the painting. Holding the

(1994), p. 72.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 115.

¹⁵ Settis, p. 18.

square and compass he gazes into the cave attempting to perhaps measure the mysteries, or more aptly to unveil the occluded and hidden through the laws of mathematics and measurement. This might additionally refer to the allegorical aspects of the square and compass exhaustively covered by countless volumes of Freemasonic writings throughout the ages.¹⁶ So too the eldest of the three in the painting holds the compasses and a scroll of astrological forecasting with an image of an eclipse presented. The contribution of the eldest of the three can now be seen as firmly knowledgeable in the ways of the stars and manuscripts while the youngest concentrates in the ways of the world around him. Giorgione tells us through them that he understands the concept of these mysteries as well.

We may be better served in our reading of *La Tempesta*, by taking a similar stance whereby we can utilize the relationships of each element to narrate possible meanings of the whole of the painting. Some, however, stand as more plausibly supported relationships between the images. Settis lists several interpretations extending from 1530 to 1976 that state allegorical relationships seen as several collections of ancient thought.¹⁷ It is not the intent of this paper to list them all. I will include a few plausible interpretations as to the relationship of the figures in the painting to 15th and 16th century Renaissance Italy and the possible knowledge of the two suggested patrons. In effort to depict some of the images in a sensible

¹⁶ See: Manly Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* as well as Kenneth Mackenzie's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*.

¹⁷ Settis, p. 78.

allegory as well as a continual and potentially timeless interpretation, I present a few combinations of the images as they were perceived in antiquity.¹⁸

Adam and Eve Myth

Most likely the closest to the surface interpretations contemporary with the painter and the Christian viewers of the early 16th Century, Adam and Eve would be plausible as an immediate interpretation. Framed with impending doom and suffering, we see Eve astride two shrubs emblematical of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge. One, most likely the tree of life, is dead indicating a lack of access to it and presenting death as the utmost inevitability of life. The tree of knowledge remains lush and full and placed before the nude Eve as it is now theirs to know right from wrong because of Eve. Eve sits with the suckling Cain; firstborn of the duo. Cain later kills his brother Abel and thus adds to the collection of sin surrounding Eve. Eve's eyes are ever aware of her transgression against God as they gaze outwardly in a knowing and anticipatory remorse. God as depicted in the lightning and the clouded storm presents his wrath at their sins, reminding the viewer of the pains of transgression and sin against God. At the foot of Eve in a crevice, slithers a snake, perhaps the very snake that tempted Eve in the Garden. The pillars represent a loss of the perfection of the Garden never to be readmitted and are broken, as their lives will ultimately become. The snake retreats in cowardice at the presence of God above. Adam looks toward his wife, as he is visibly separate from her. As she is now exposing her nakedness in sin, showing the sin of

¹⁸ Ibid.

woman, he is apart from her, clothed but fading into darkness as his skin tone and the lighting suggests. In this depiction we see the fall of man and the wrathful vengeance of God that brings all to their eventual demise. Several images are not taken into account with this interpretation and leave the trained eye to seek more.

St Christopher's Legend

Parallel to the Adam and Eve Myth, the surface thinking of the title of the painting, *La Tempesta*, may also have indicated the concept of the eventual deepening of the waters quickly following a storm. On the left we see a man with a staff looking toward the young child and mother. In addition to other interpretations, I also see this woman possibly as a version of the divine mother Mary as pure nurturer of God, we can see the child then as a depiction of the baby Jesus as portrayed in St. Christopher's legend. The notion of Jesus is more strengthened by the partial occlusion of the baby, as the legend suggests that Jesus was being carried across the river by Christopher and didn't reveal he was Jesus until afterward. As viewers, we are privy to the moments just before the tempestuous storm approaches and subsequently deepens the waters. We then understand that following legend, they will become difficult to traverse and the man, as St Christopher, depicted as serving God the highest, readies himself to perform his task as human ferry, just before the rising waters. This then serves to highlight duty to God and service selflessly to the faith. The broken columns then are to reinforce the retracted practices of paganism by Christopher in the legend, as well

as to remind the viewer of Christopher's eventual demise at the hands of Romans¹⁹. The lightning represents this severity while presenting a reminder that all mankind, in the cities of the Romans or the Italy of Giorgione as well, are under God's command.

Osiris, Isis and Horus

We find evidence of a further developed intellectual exchange between the renaissance patron and painter. Now viewing these figures as the ancient Osirian myth we are presented with more of the canvas to consider. Starting with the nude woman, I can assume she is Isis, wife to Osiris. Isis is femininity, fertility, and motherhood. She is the ultimate in archetypal female. Her husband Osiris was slain by his jealous brother Set²⁰. As the myth presents itself within the funeral texts of the great pyramids of Giza,²¹ Set killed Osiris by conspiring with 72 demons²² and sealing him into a coffin, eventually setting him adrift on the Nile River to die.²³ We then learn through the myth that several versions require the box that Osiris is in to either be swallowed by a tree, or that he became the tree, or that Osiris lay as one with the ground. The tale continues when a king, often depicted as Set, cut the tree to become the main pillar in his great hall.²⁴ Isis searched the earth by transforming into a bird and eventually finds Osiris, mounts his phallus and becomes pregnant

¹⁹ Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*. Princeton University Press, 2012. Pp. 396-9.

²⁰ Von Franz, p.187-191.

²¹ Allen, James Peter, and Peter Der Manuelian, eds. *The ancient Egyptian pyramid texts*. No. 23. Brill, 2005.9, 124-9

²² Ibid.; Peterson, Joseph H., ed. *The Lesser Key of Solomon: Lemegeton Clavicula Salomonis*. Weiser Books, 1999.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Naydler, pp. 83, 278

with Horus known as Harpocrates.²⁵ Set then returned to destroy Osiris completely and scattered his body across the world. Isis collects all of him but his phallus, which is either eaten by a fish or a crocodile.²⁶ The column represents both the image of the body and the phallus of Osiris. Here we see Osiris depicted as a broken column; as a dead god. His earthly body was broken by Set and strewn across the land but his pro-generative force is immortal²⁷ The column then simultaneously becomes a depiction of the Djed Pillar in the halls of the kings of antiquity as well as being the phallus for Isis to mount.²⁸ As complex an image as the Djed pillar can be, it can be seen as the promised raising of the God Osiris. That it is broken or laid upon the ground suggests his physical death yet not spiritual one, and the aspect of it made into a temple-like pillar furthers the myth that Osiris' phallus was lost and was artificially created by the magic of Nepthys, Thoth and Isis.²⁹ In following Egyptian themes, Thoth is known as the god of knowledge and magic and is often represented by an Ibis. Here we observe Thoth as an Ibis bird, perched high above the buildings in *La Tempesta*.

The birth of Horus, as a renewed Osiris and balanced form of divine energies, then placed Set as a counterpart to Horus but did not finalize any defeat or end to Set as an earthly or cosmic influence.³⁰ Set is noted by Marie Louise Von Franz in her *Golden Ass of Apuleius* to be associated with all things red in that: "The color red is attributed to [sic] Seth, and in the Egyptian Language 'doing red things'

²⁵ Von Franz, p. 191.

²⁶ Bojana Mojsov. Osiris: Death and afterlife of a god. Wiley. com, 2008. Pp. xx,xvii, 2.

²⁷ Naydler, pp.82-3.

²⁸ Naydler, pp. 274-279.

²⁹ Naydler, pp.47-8.

³⁰ Allen, James Peter, and Peter Der Manuelian, eds. *The ancient Egyptian pyramid texts*. No. 23. Brill, 2005.9, 124-9

means doing evil.” Franz further notes that the color green is a depiction presented by Egyptians as being of Osiris.³¹ *La Tempesta* presents a man clothed in red gazing at the young Horus and Isis. We also may note that there is a light source behind him that casts shadows contradictory to that in the sky. If Horus is to be eventually seen as a heavenly force and synonymous with the Sun itself we can understand that there is a conflict even in light sources or power of gods. It may be no wonder Isis here is shielding Horus from his gaze and looks to the viewer to do something.

Here now we understand the messianic context of a return of the God to finally defeat Set. The raising of the pillar is to resurrect the God, a concept deeply entrenched from antiquity to the Christian Humanist movement in Renaissance Venice, and serves as a mystic allegory of self-actualization embraced in mystery cults.³²

Demeter as Eleusinian mysteries

We come now to another mystery tradition that survives through the telling of a familial dynamic, albeit tragic, that may describe aspects of the painting that may still seem disconnected or less complete than other interpretations.

The goddess Demeter, as depicted by the nude woman in *La Tempesta* was both sister and wife to Zeus. Demeter was in control of all forces of earthly nature. Although Zeus was married to Hera as well, Demeter commanded his attention

³¹ Von Franz, p189

³² Christian allegory of Jesus, the Rites of Eleusis from ancient Greece as well as the Mythraic cults and early Roman worship of Creres. See: C. Kerényi “The Gods of the Greeks” as well as Robert Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl Anton Paul Ruck. *The road to Eleusis: Unveiling the secret of the mysteries*. North Atlantic Books, 2008, pp. 11, 61.

enough for Zeus to jealously guard her as his own. The legend furthers with Demeter falling in love with a semi-mortal man named Iasion³³, which we can see as the Man in *La Tempesta*. Although Demeter already has the child Persephone who is central to the Eleusinian mysteries³⁴ she conceives and birth to twins named Ploutos, the god of riches, underworld and the Eleusinian divine child, and Philomelus, the god of agriculture who built the wagon and plow.

Bringing the attention back to the images in *La Tempesta* we see upon the wall of one building a series of wheels. Although this has been additionally synonymous with the symbol for Padua it may suggest yet another layer in the case of Philomelus. Upon finding out about the infidelity of Demeter, Zeus sent a lightning bolt down to kill Iasion who is also his own son.

The combined symbols of agriculture and wealth associated with the Italian city states are central to the development of renaissance patronage of the arts and a key factor in the birth of the whole of the early modern period.

As complex of a scenario as we can see in this portrayal of images, there are elements similar to the Egyptian myth that include conflict, death, a jealous God, and the hints of a mystic ritual tradition. Iasion is additionally known as a Cretian deity who led the sacred initiatory rites of Eleusis with Demeter and Persephone. In essence it was Iasion who was the initiator.³⁵ If we can see the possibility of Eleusinian mystery involved within renaissance paintings like Giorgione's, we can

³³ Kerenyi, p. 113.

³⁴ Wasson, p. 61, Kerenyi p. 184.

³⁵ Kerenyi, pp.113-4.

draw a clearer connection between images on renaissance paintings and the esoteric images found within contemporary solomonic manuscripts.

Hermetic / The Tarot

If *La Tempesta* was produced in the 16th century to be an effectively symbol-laden allegory of antiquity, it must then offer a fusion of thought that was carried through crusades of the previous centuries³⁶, conquests of the Ottomans and Islamic thought³⁷, as well as the Hermetic alchemical notions newly explored through astrology and understood relationships of material and symbolic subjects. I view *La Tempesta* also in a Hermetic light. To do so we must then see its value as an assortment of symbols that are interdependent, whereby they all have some kind of relationship to a greater whole; to be valued and defined by the viewer.

The center of the painting is often seen in Hermetic emblems as a focal key to the periphery objects. With columns, water and a bridge central to this painting we can begin to piece the aspects together. Columns present not so much the physically representative architecture as much as metaphoric solidity, upholding philosophical constructs. Manly Hall when linking pillars to the kabbalah through the sephirothic pillars, states that “The three columns are called *Mercy* (on the right), and *Severity* (on the left), and, between them, *Mildness*, as the reconciling power.” The Hebrew tradition is reinforced if we see the pillars as emblems of Jachin, denoted as establishment, and Boaz, as strength, from the outer porch of King Solomon’s

³⁶ See: Madden, Hildenbrand, Riley-Smith.

³⁷ Ozment, pp. 175

Temple.³⁸ *La Tempesta* and Biblical scripture may suggest the although temple Solomon is destroyed, the covenant of God survives through the mystical and initiatory traditions. Hermeticists fuse a further notion in that as Hall suggests, each Kabbalistic Sephiroth of the tree of life takes on the characteristics of each planetary sphere first depicted by Dante so that we can view the heavenly spheres as synonyms for the Sephiroth of the Kabbalists.³⁹ It may follow that the image of the dead shrub is the Kabbalistic tree of life to be discovered through recognition of the transformative mystical tradition in order that man following a spiritual death and rebirth, becomes finally like God.⁴⁰ The woman sits across from the man who is standing. She nurses the child while he holds a staff. The duality is certainly suggestive while, as Hall suggests, there exists a mitigating force of masculine and feminine energy whereby the river is the third aspect or a pillar of balanced virtue.⁴¹

The man looks to the woman while the woman looks to the viewer. The viewer by looking at the Man forms a triangle whereby the awareness of the viewer the active principle within the painting and thereby accesses its mystical nature. To place the viewer as a part of the painting connects the layered symbolism to the living person in that moment. Hall suggests that the triangle forms a Tetragrammaton or divine name of god whereby "...arranging the four letters of the Great Name...(IHVH), in the Pythagorean Tetractys, the 72 powers of the Great name of God are manifested." In 1533 H.C. Agrippa showed the triangular Tetragrammaton in *De Occulta Philosophia*...(See Fig. 3.1) and served to inspire

³⁸ I Kings, V, 2 Chronicles, I Kings 8, in holy bible. NKJV

³⁹ Hall, p. 386-7

⁴⁰ Settis p. 26, Hall pp. 386-9

⁴¹ See Fig. 3.3.

Hall's arrangement of the Hebrew letters in English transposition to be read right to left. Hall assigned their Kabbalistic numeric values, as understood in Hebrew, and presented this:⁴²

I	=10	10
H I	=5+10	15
V H I	=6+5+10	21
H V H I	=5+6+5+10	+26
Great Name of God		72

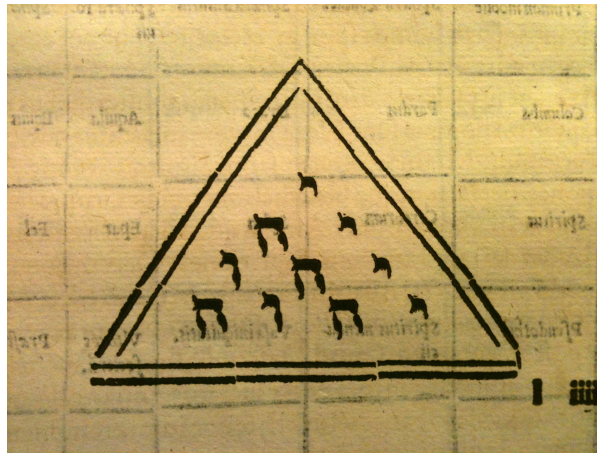


Figure 3.1: Tetragrammaton Triangle with Hebrew Letters from H.C. Agrippa's 1533 *De Occulta Philosophia* fig.iiii.

Agrippa additionally discusses the triangular arrangement of the monad of the divine letters of the Hebrew four-letter name of God.⁴³ We see again the presence of a force of 72 having profound effects on the outcome of massive spiritual transition, as we did with Set and Osiris. The lightning at the top of *La Tempesta* can also be viewed as the Yod letter atop the triangle of the man, woman

⁴² Hall p. 359. See Also Cirlot pp. 350, 351 for symbolism of the triangle.

⁴³ Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, 1550.

and lightning. Here however, the painting engages the attention of the viewer to participate in this triangular union.

Known also as the Hebrew Shemhamphorash,⁴⁴ the divine 72-letter name of God is found deeply within the magical tradition and was elucidated around the same time as *La Tempesta* and fully printed for wider European audiences only 25 years after this painting with the contributions of Agrippa in Germany.⁴⁵ The 72-letter name of God was central to the development of the circumferential letters of the Sigil Dei Aemeth found in several Solomonic texts previously discussed and later in John Dee's wax tablets discussed in Chapter Two.

Further imagery transcendent of language and intended for multiple layers of numeric interpretation was noted among the popular card games and divinations of the early Tarot card decks of the 15th century onward. It is through Germany specifically that we find much of the magical tarot originating within the early Italian city-states. Isabella D'Este, would have known well of the production of Germanic Tarochi card "games" in Ferrara.⁴⁶ The Tarot was well known within Venetian and Renaissance Italian circles and provided a method to disseminate hermetic and alchemical imagery on astrology and magical kabbalah, long before any texts would be translated widely. It wasn't for another 100 years that Agrippa's Texts were taken out of Latin and German and into English but the contents were read known well by the Elizabethan astrologer John Dee.⁴⁷ Nevertheless the tarot superseded language and imparted ancient philosophy to any viewer irrespective of

⁴⁴ Agrippa, (1533) *De Occulta Philosophia*... Book III.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Kristen Lippincott. "'Mantegna's Tarocchi'." (1986): 357-360.

⁴⁷ See John Dee's 5 Books of Mystery.

cultural, educational or societal origin. Taking a few elements from *La Tempesta*, we can see similarities to the tarot card “The Star”.

In the Tarot of Marseille⁴⁸ set of cards from the 15th and early 16th century, the trump card “Le Toille” or The Star depicts a nude woman with light hair facing the viewer’s left. She kneels by a stream or pool with one foot in the water and one foot on land with her knee on the land; her legs forming right angles similar to part of a swastika of Indian origin. She holds vessels to pour waters onto land and back into the water. Above her is a bright star, which A. E. Waite describes as Horus as the sun God.⁴⁹ Behind the woman is a bird upon a high bush or tree.



Figure 3.2: An early 18th-century reproduction of the 15th-century Tarot of Marseille card “The Star” from the tarot of Jean Dodal. ⁵⁰ Note the bird in the tree above and behind the nude woman.

⁴⁸ Robert Michael Place, *The Tarot: History, symbolism, and divination*. Penguin, 2005, p. 7, 23,24.

⁴⁹ Waite p.138

⁵⁰ Tarot of Jean Dodal is dated between 1701-1715 however Historian Robert Swiryn writes that the star’s

La Tempesta gives us a strikingly similar picture with the woman's peculiar arrangement of her legs coupled with the bird above and behind her. There is an obstructed sun image, although clouded, and even water below her. The complications of this image are that she does not have one foot in the water like the Tarochi nor is she carrying two water vessels. It is possible to suggest that the nursing child in *La Tempesta* now replaces the waters in *The Star* but it remains my own speculation purely. If we follow A.E. Waite's interpretation that the Star is giving life force to lesser sephiroth by being the aspect of divine feminine of Binah, then the child is the recipient directly. We may have a solution to the problem of her foot not being in the water as well. The x-ray image of the painting shows a woman in the pool where the man now stands.⁵¹

We know of Venice as a major port city for all of the Mediterranean from medieval to modern times.⁵² By 1500 it has seen trade with most all of the known world. Venice may be the city in the background of *La Tempesta* due to the indication of the Lion of St Mark appearing on a building. It may also be Padua because of the wheels of the city of Padua appearing on another wall.⁵³ It may simply imply the known Italian sphere of influence as was seen in the early 1500s. In as much as Christianity was dominant as an influence on Venetian life, the

imagery comes from a 12th century origin associated with Arthurian myth and Eon de l'Etoile (1150). See Robert Swiryn, Pau Hana Publishing, 2010, p. 171; Also: The Secret of the Tarot, Robert Michael Place *The History, Symbolism and Divination*, Penguin 2005, p. 2, 156, Place notes Marseilles as a center of Tarot production outside of Italy by 1507, and the occurrence of a semi-nude woman within the star card of the deck.

⁵¹ Settis, pp. 72-75. The nude bather is seen through x-ray and is reconstructed with the final elements of *The Tempest* in various stages; Waite p.136 for the modern distillation of various tarot stemming from the Tarochi.

⁵² Ozment, pp.184,191, 255; Martines, pp 171, 261

⁵³ Pagden, Scire, p. 190 Enlarged image of lion.

Humanist form Christianity was taking provided a cultural allowance for exploration of the self among the educated elite of the Italian renaissance. Paintings like *The Three Philosophers* and *La Tempesta* serve to illustrate what aspects of spiritual life were prevalent among the elite who commissioned the paintings. We see the grandeur of cities, buildings; the remnants of antiquity through architecture. We further observe the knowledge of geometry to be not exclusive to a craft guild but to the philosopher and seeker of wisdom as *The Three Philosophers* suggests. In this, the arts and sciences are depicted for their spiritual and potentially transformative values. We cannot accept the surface rejections of Vasari that:

“Giorgione set to work, but with no other purpose than to make figures of fancy to display his art, for I cannot discover any [sic] connexion between them nor whether they represent some ancient or modern story, and I myself do not understand them, nor have I found anyone who did.”⁵⁴

Offered another way by Sir Kenneth Clark:

“No one knows what it represents; even [sic] Michiel, writing almost in Giorgione’s day, could offer no better title than ‘a soldier and a gypsy’, and I think there is little doubt that it is a free fantasy...; part of its incantatory power lies in its defiance of logic, in the strange detachment of the figures, who seem unaware of each other’s existence, or of the approaching storm and in the inexplicable character of the ruins in the middle distance, which can never have formed part of a real building.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Wind, p. 1

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The enigma presented in *La Tempesta* and as a 16th century repository of esoteric thought, may have escaped the outward knowledge of each commentary but the undeniable probability is as Settis projects, that we have, central to the painting in the form of the broken temple-like column, a hieroglyph of the death of crude paganism. In observing the columns Settis remarks that alike to the seal of the Philotheus showing two broken columns with a lightning bolt between, they represent a form of “spiritual fortitude” surrendering only to God above.⁵⁶ 16th-century Venice, Florence, and Padua with common Christian and humanist leanings, would have known well that open pagan tendencies were a thing of the very distant past. *La Tempesta* deals not with the changing dogmatic ventures of ruling class idioms but more with the notion that as Giorgione has placed himself in paintings and self-portraits as a David of biblical “David and Goliath”,⁵⁷ he in true Hermetic and humanist manner, issues that we too can find ourselves spiritually lifted to commune with God as we seek human perfection. With the use of symbol rather than narrative Giorgione depicts layers that indicate several philosophical and spiritual beliefs coexisting within one portrayal, a technique repeated often within the mix of hermetic and alchemical symbolism on material cultures shown within the early modern Grimoires. Reading the symbolism within depictions and the use of space and geometry we discover that the purpose of various images are not wholly discernable by a sole interpretation alone. Rather, the images laden with multiple meanings were intended to depict several interpretations, able to be understood by various social groups with varying intellectual and spiritual origins.

⁵⁶ Settis pp. 104, 105

⁵⁷ Settis pp. 140,141.



Figure 3.3 : Giorgione's 1506/8 *La Tempesta* oil on canvas from Gallerie dell'Accademia of Venice, Italy. Reproduced from a public domain file found at <http://www.wga.hu/html/g/giorgion/index.html>



Figure 3.4 : Giorgione's Three Philosophers oil on canvas, 124cm by 145cm from Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Conclusion

The grimoire production among various communities and individuals throughout Europe and was most widely noted and documented during the late 1500s to mid 1600s. Possible identities of various magic practitioners would suggest a possible link as to origins of information pertaining to various methods and origins of magic practice. However, such evidence is shrouded in secrecy caused by persecution of Jewish communities, suspicions of heresy, and behaviors not canonically accepted by either the inquisition and expulsion legacies of Spain and mainland Europe, or that of the newly reformed German church-state. Magic by way of grimoires, indicates a number of potential contributors that have had access to all levels and social strata and have permeated into the very fabric of life known to the Renaissance.

Through my methods to elucidate the known variants of magical cultures, we can see that grimoires show a widely underrepresented or arguably ignored element of early modern cultures that illuminated the very core of beliefs of various people throughout Europe and provided a useful medium for both condemnation as well as divinely inspired persuasion of multiple institutions. Looking into the educational institutions of the time we see ones that were previously only available to men seeking the clergy as in the case of the Oxbridge schools. According to William H. Huffman, between 1500 and 1520, major curriculum changes were in place at both Universities. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge both showed changes toward a more humanist curriculum at this time with the importance

placed on language study in Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Philosophy. John Dee wrote all of his works in Latin, which is a testimonial to his educational roots at Cambridge. It would appear then that the intended readership of works would have to be of the highest educated mind. Dee's use of Enochian however suggested that the subject matter of his magical works were not even intended for the average scholar; that they were perhaps for a more enlightened readership.

Dee's Sigil¹ denoting his unique Enoch language and elemental attributes, became the focus of his legacy as a magic practitioner although no evidence exists in his works showing him actually practicing the Enochian system² we do know that he physically made the wax sigils. As previously noted, the sigil alone is a testimonial to far older talismanic and amulet magic seen within the ancient Greek and Hebrew folk practices³ as well as within grimoires associated with Jewish natural and talismanic magic.⁴

I have discussed Dee's wax tablets of the Sigil Dei Aemeth and his diary accounts denoting a complex working system of Enochian magic.⁵ I have shown examples of Dee's table of practice that further suggests an *Almadel*-like construction and appearance. The combinations seen within Dee's works specifically, show an almost hybrid of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin linguistic reasoning

1 The British Library, MS Sloane 3188 f. 30.

2 The British Library, MS Sloane 3191; See also John Dee, *Five Books of Mystery*, Ed. Joseph Peterson, Weiser Books, 2003: Clear images of the original manuscripts show Dee's precise formulation of angelic tables that are far more extensive than Agrippa's previous work.

3 Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England 1550-1750*, Longman London and New York, 1998, p. 88-89.

4 Abraham von Worms, *The Book of Abramelin, A New Translation*, Compiled and Edited by Georg Dehn, Translated by Steven Guth, Forward By Lon Milo DuQuette, Ibis Press an imprint of Nicholas Hays Inc., Lake Worth FL, 2006

⁵ Geoffrey James, *The Enochian Evocation of John Dee*, Weiser, 2006.

that hints not only at other solomonic texts but shows a drastic departure from anything either strictly Catholic or protestant. It appears to be in line with the newly formed 16th century university curricula once again. That being said, nothing in Dee's later works was done with intent to distribute on a mass scale. His works were only released posthumously and with no narrative of practice, further indicating that the audience was select and restricted.

The authors of earlier grimoires had a uniquely educated understanding of magic that reflected and supported an inherently holistic approach. At odds with the trends of the reformation itself, whose doctrine was desirous of removing any mystery from the practice of astrology, Agrippa and his contemporaries sought to see the world from the prospective of both a macrocosmic, infinite universe whilst honestly looking at the microcosmic self and physiology of the individual. It would appear then that the early modern physician-astrologer was aware of forces outside the body of man himself and therefore have to acknowledge an additional set of influences. Due to humanism widening the philosophical and linguistic availability to scholars, there existed then a method to not only decipher certain texts but also to also place them in a context for intellectual digestion that was a departure from the previous liberal arts perspectives of a university curriculum.

The images of pentacle-talismans I have shown depicted within the grimoires indicate a modern desire to give the impression of ancient religious and philosophical thought by their complex use of Latin, Kabbalistic and Greek names of deity, angelic orders, and the claim of King Solomon as the author of the genre. Despite any ancient claim of grimoire materials, the existence of Malachim cipher

within any manuscript suggests that the parent source of such grimoires also contained the Malachim script. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim presented Malachim cipher in manuscript form in 1510 and then in print form in 1533, whereas no other known source for malachim is currently recognized. Although it could be argued that Agrippa himself had access to materials denoting a continuum to antiquity, the rest of the solomonic genre was evidently not exclusively consulting such material and had to be borrowing aspects from Agrippa. This effectively places Agrippa as an intellectual source for the majority of Solomonic grimoires in the 16th century rather than antiquity.

The Greek BL MS Harleian 5596 and the French and Latin BnF MS Francais 14783, both do not contain any specifically ordered Malachim ciphered script. As they both predate Agrippa's work and are absent of Malachim, they further strengthen my claim of Agrippa's creation of Malachim. Additionally it is important to note that Harleian 5596, although connected to the Solomonic cycle due to the depicted magic circle it contains, is not written in the same format as the rest of the Solomonic genre; it does not contain any ordering of specific pentacles of astrological significance. Francais 14783 maintains a dates from 1401-1500,⁶ thus implying an uncertainty of whether it predates Agrippa's early 16th century influence on the Solomonic genre. This particular manuscript has not previously been discussed by any scholarship and requires more attention than it has received here.

⁶ BnF's online digital collection, Francais 14783, indicates in the full record: "Date 1401-1500" with no further details about date.

As I've indicated, the Sepher Razim and Sepher Raziel texts from the 1st to 5th centuries C.E. both have letterforms that resemble Malachim however two aspects complicate a claim to a direct Solomonic link.⁷ First, no current rabbinical text has been able to decipher them or indicate their meaning within either the Raziel or Razim. Secondly, the full character types are different enough to assume any Malachim ordered translation as impossible at this time.

The repeated occurrence of Malachim cipher itself suggests another unique aspect of the grimoires. Due to the continuance of Hebrew letter-names for Malachim letters, we can further conclude that the Solomonic genre had clear knowledge of Hebrew mystical traditions in the spellings of Kabbalist angelic orders. In the case of the Elohim and Auralim circular ciphers indicated within the Mars pentacle depictions mentioned in Chapter Two, the crypto-Jewish elements of the grimoires further suggest a clandestine attempt to embed Jewish thought into an educated European literary tradition. We also see a crypto-catholic investiture in the Solomonic cycle with the Latin Psalm versicles surrounding several pentacles regardless of language translations of the body of the text. These elements serve to reinforce the claim of intentional secrecy within the grimoires for fear of religious backlash at practicing illegal religious and spiritual forms.

It may be that the most important conclusion of this thesis is to understand that grimoires, as an esoteric literature, may not have been designed as recipe books or instructional guides for ritual practice. Despite the proliferation of Dee's diary

⁷ *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries*. California: Scholars Press, 1983; Susanna Akerman. "Queen Christina's Latin Sefer-Ha-Raziel Manuscript." *Judaeo-Christian Intellectual Culture in the Seventeenth Century*. Springer Netherlands, 1999. 13-25.

accounts showing each scrying session whereby he purportedly received angelic directives to create each piece, we do not read about Dee actually using them. In fact, no examples of any known early modern author currently exist, that names a person engaged in Solomonic grimoire arts or even Dee's hybrid Enochian system. Perhaps the grimoires can be best understood as a library tradition rather than a practical engagement of working magic as described by Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard in the introduction to this work. Here we can understand the grimoire as the evidence of the practice of magic itself. Instead of viewing the grimoire as a compendium of directives to create outside of the text, the grimoire may also have been an exercise of reproduction, wholly contained as a process for the scribe to reproduce and the magician to possess.

The various grimoires note creating the grimoire images on various metals or pages of vellum, drawn with colored inks on certain lunar, solar and planetary positions and hours. If we understand the whole of the solomonic tradition as a process of transcription, we then understand that the reproduction was indeed one within the library and not the laboratory. However, I acknowledge that the lack of evidence doesn't definitively prescribe the purpose of grimoires. They could exist as any written form of liturgy. In the case of Dee we know that at least some of the tools were created from images on the page. Regardless of any actual practice of the magic of the grimoires, we know that many were produced anonymously on both vellum and paper, printed and written by hand. The printing press did not interfere with continual hand copied editions as late as the 18th century.⁸ The coexistence of

⁸ See: Sibly Hockley and Peterson, *Clavis or Key to the Magic of Solomon*, Ibis, 2006

printed and manuscript versions may strengthen the idea that they were for designed for reproduction as the primary means of their practice.

We see that the scribes and printers for solomonic grimoires may have also replaced the scholars, in that the transcriptions, as I discussed in Chapter II, were badly represented and indicative of a lack of knowledge about the characters the scribe was reproducing. We see several examples of stylized renditions of what can be compared to actually writing from other solomonic texts. We have seen drawing variations, as well as inverted and nonsensical letterforms in several solomonic texts. Here the symbolic nature of text is clearly embraced as a tradition of its own.

Giorgione's paintings in Chapter Three show the manner of Hermetic and spiritual symbols that may be employed in the early 1500s at the time of Agrippa's writing. I showed that his works suggest a changing world that became decidedly humanist and Neo-Platonic and cryptically hermetic. Giorgione essentially reflects values depicted outside of linguistics that require a trained eye to see. We see this same imagery and geometric symbolism existent in the earliest forms of the Tarot as noted by Isabella d'Este's family ties in Germany, as well as within the more basic images depicted in the grimoires. Here we can see the layered understanding of the hermetic arts whereby we can have a glimpse into the magical process shown in the circles and squares of the grimoire evocations. This occult and esoteric knowledge takes shape of evoking god in every task.

Understanding the grimoires as examples of an experimental process whereby the practitioner is central to the operations, in a very humanist manner, we now know the grimoires to exist as truly experiential beginnings to understanding

the distinction between empirical sciences and intrinsic magic. As I've indicated in Chapter two, the nomenclature in the grimoires shifted between 1400 and 1800. We see subject headings change from "Experience" to "Operation" and finally to "Experiment". We observe the magical tradition moving away from the magus within the circle and part of the process, as is the case of the eldest Solomonic grimoires, and witness the magus Dee looking into his circle from the outside, apart from the physical engagement and solely intellectual. Thus, indicating the possible rise of scientific neutrality and decline of magical arts requiring man as the central focus.

I have indicated that no examples of practice or narratives by practitioners exist within the 1400-1800s. We also know little of any grimoire traditions, either by older Solomonic traditions or within Dee's hybridized grimoires. That we do see a resurgence of grimoire use, practice and translation at the end of the 19th century suggests the possibility that grimoires may have been practiced as written. The existence and awareness of Grimoires from 1800 onward is in need of further examination. Additionally Dee's hybridized system from 1700s onward is worth serious examination to determine any practices and combined acknowledgement of Solomonic-like practices among any adherents to the system.

The determination of any grimoires continuum of practice or transcription could suggest elements of spiritual and early scientific thought among figures within the Enlightenment onward. As I have suggested in this study, the Solomonic grimoires did serve as a collection of esoterically religious and philosophical thought that aided in forming part of the backbone of our modern scientific method

and worthy of further discovery within their translations and examination of images.

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